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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 21 September 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Nalbandian (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grabar-Kitarović: "We want a future in which everyone lives a happy life and loves one another". Those words were recently written in the *Book of Ideas* by a six-year-old boy named Lovro when he visited my office along with a number of other children to mark the beginning of the new school year in Croatia. But they could easily have been written by any child in the world. It is a simple, yet powerful, wish. In order to transform our world, we as leaders must listen to Lovro's words. And for that reason I want his voice to be heard today in the General Assembly. Everyone can agree that those simple truths, among which are the right to a happy life and the freedom of choice, as universal drivers of a better world, are indeed the ultimate objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A year has passed since we adopted the milestone Agenda 2030, and we are now one step and one year closer to its deadline. Today, in terms of achievements and responsibilities, I would like to address sustainable development by focusing on human potential, natural resources and resilient societies.

We have all signed onto the Agenda, our plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. People should be at the heart of our efforts, with youth at the very core. Our goal as leaders is to empower our youth through education and give them opportunities to be the catalysts of transformation and progress. Now is the time to start viewing our youth as the guardians of Agenda 2030, because in 14 years whatever progress we have achieved will be theirs to carry on.

I would agree with many who argue that even today, in 2016, we must decide whether we opt for open or closed societies. Whatever we do to safeguard the future should be done with determination, with clear choices in mind.

There is much work to be done. We must begin by restoring public confidence in Governments and international organizations. We must embrace our common values with strength, courage and true conviction — beginning with tolerance — and become active and dedicated builders of a world where there is no room for despair.

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True inclusiveness means more than just being open to cooperation and raising awareness from time to time. It should be a continuous search for consensus, nationally and internationally, and the active involvement of all stakeholders in building new strategic alliances. There is an evident need for ending the prevailing silo approach, if we are to achieve synergies when implementing mutually interdependent goals. Security, prosperity and human rights go hand-in-hand and cannot be separated.

According to the latest UNICEF statistics, over 50 million children are currently uprooted, and almost 60 million children do not have access to primary education. Those children are counting on us to give them the chance they deserve. We should not act only when moved by images, such as those of the Syrian boys Aylan and Omran, which are true symbols of our world gone horribly wrong.

The optimism and resilience shown by children and, most of all, their unbridled honesty are qualities that I respect and admire. All children should have the right to their childhood and education. It is devastating to know how many children could not begin class this autumn because they are victims of the various global crises that we allow to persist.

In terms of unlocking global human potential, I believe that if we want to give future generations a chance for a better life by 2030, we must address three main, mutually reinforcing, phenomena: large-scale migrations, demographic dynamics and youth unemployment. We need a predictable, humane, responsible and legally sound system of governing international migration. Croatia commends the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which the General Assembly adopted on Monday, as well as the Agenda for Humanity presented at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul last May. Implementing them together with Agenda 2030 will help us address the root causes of the large movements of people. On that issue we need not minimize anyone's dignity or rights, nor underestimate the perils that surround them.

Our immediate focus should be two-fold. We must provide assistance to both the countries of origin and the receiving countries in order to promote safe, regular and orderly migration management. We must promote global efforts to counter organized-crime networks involved in human trafficking. What we have is a global crisis of human mobility and, as such, it requires a global response.

We must end the policy of double standards and the hypocritical approach to the tragedy that is unfolding as we speak. We must help those who have managed to leave the fields of destruction, but we must also do our utmost to assist those who have stayed behind and are left with no means of or strength to escape.

All societies, developed and underdeveloped alike, are currently facing not only one generation, but several generations, of youth that are unemployed, disappointed and discouraged, while others are trying to escape from conflict, violence and intolerance. They are extremely sceptical about their future and become easy prey for all kinds of manipulation and radicalization.

Social media and modern communications technology are becoming a double-edged sword. They provide us with unparalleled opportunities, making the world interconnected in ways that only yesterday few dared to dream of. At the same time, they carry the dark potential to spread hatred and intolerance and build invisible walls around those who look or think differently. We must pay special attention to that possibility and find the prudence to use new technologies to improve not only our daily lives, but also our hearts and minds.

Education, knowledge and tolerance are more than just the tools of choice when dealing with political and social discrimination, exclusion and the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism. They are the way forward. They are the key to success and are fundamental drivers of sustainable development.

Constant investment in education systems always pays back with big dividends. Ever more countries are recognizing the necessity of a comprehensive education reform, because too many current education systems are generating youth who cannot find employment. Education has the power to multiply opportunities. It is an engine that creates choices, providing every individual with the freedom to choose a path of his or her own.

Gender inequality is the most pervasive form of global inequality and a pressing human rights concern. Women and girls continue to be exposed to a range of obstacles to their complete and full inclusion in social, economic and political life. There will be no real progress without a gender-responsive implementation

of Agenda 2030. For us to succeed we need more women in politics and business, in diplomacy and on executive boards. But that will not happen without men. Their role in the empowerment of women, their support and understanding, are as crucial as the will of women to succeed.

This year, Croatia is chairing the Equal Futures Partnership — an innovative multilateral initiative aimed at encouraging Member States to empower women economically and politically. The high-level meeting of its members and supporters will take place tomorrow. I invite all those present to find the time to pay due attention to that endeavour.

Nature is just as irreplaceable as people are. Development strategies must seriously take into account our natural resources as the fundamental starting point. Climate change is a powerful weapon of mass destruction that is going out of control. We have very little time to reverse that self-destructive course. Climate change is also a risk multiplier for other security challenges, including large-scale migrations and regional instability born out of hopelessness and desolation. We must ensure climate action and make sure that the recent Paris Agreement enters into force as soon as possible.

As a country on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, Croatia is following the developments across that cradle of our civilization with care and deep concern. The southern Mediterranean has, sadly, become a sea of dangerous journeys, where the legendary tales of the classical world are being replaced by new stories of human suffering, where ancient monuments are being reduced to dust and where indifference to human life sometimes reaches an unimaginable scale. The stability, security and well-being of the Mediterranean remain a priority of Croatian foreign policy.

Our societies are exposed to a complex global security environment with increased mutual dependencies. There is a whole range of hybrid threats to national and international security: violent extremism, terrorism, foreign terrorist fighters, uncontrolled migration, organized crime, risks related to the cyberenvironment, and the malicious use of new technologies. Large-scale migrations and unemployment are interconnected, just as failed States and fragile Governments are related to conflict.

Terrorism continues to represent not only a security concern, but also a detrimental economic factor for every country, causing millions of people to leave their homes in search of safety and prosperity. We need to strengthen the resilience of our societies at the grass-roots level, particularly the fabric of multicultural and multi-confessional societies, against terrorist propaganda, attempts at violent radicalization and other extremist actions. In addition to our efforts to promote sustainable and long-term de-radicalization and fight terrorist narratives, especially those in cyberspace, we need to address the underlying socioeconomic drivers of terrorism, such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, the lack of education and the lack of economic prosperity.

When countering global threats that impede the emergence and growth of resilient societies, the issue of disarmament must remain at the forefront. Recently, we achieved success in the development and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. At the same time, large parts of the United Nations disarmament machinery are stalled. The 2015 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains a case in point. In our quest for a more secure global community, we must spare no effort in the field of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Twenty years have passed since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature, but we still need to invigorate our determination to become a nuclear-test-free world. New technologies and the fourth industrial revolution are changing our lives for the better in more ways than one. However, they also have a negative impact on security and disarmament. Technologies such as 3-D printing are changing the algorithm in the area of conventional weapons, and the misuse of cyberspace might have unforeseen consequences in the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear areas. We must therefore broaden our reach when it comes to disarmament topics and align it with new realities.

Croatia considers participation in international missions and operations to be a principal duty that can contribute to peace. In that regard, we are preparing to place the Croatian Army Engineering Horizontal Construction Company at the disposal of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Today, on the International Day of Peace, it is necessary to emphasize that women are powerful

agents of peace and security. We must not treat women only as victims of conflict and violence. Women are powerful agents of change. Their growing contribution to the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as to the maintenance of a sustainable and inclusive peace, should be encouraged. More female peacekeepers could help us combat sexual violence, promote gender awareness among the host nations' populations and improve relationships with local citizens. In order to contribute to that goal, Croatia is conducting a United Nations training course for women police officers from Asia, Africa and Europe. The course is organized back-to-back with predeployment military training in order to enhance the synergy between the military and civilian sectors by integrating the gender and multicultural aspects of peacekeeping.

We commend the Secretary-General for advancing the responsibility to protect. Over the past 10 years, a lot has been accomplished in building consensus around that concept and strengthening the will and capacity for its implementation. Croatia advocates the further strengthening of the role of the International Criminal Court so that it can assume greater responsibility in prosecuting mass atrocities and war crimes, including criminal acts against cultural heritage committed by State or non-State actors. We believe that it is of paramount importance to put an end to the culture of impunity. And that must be done without any politicization, without putting daily politics above the rule of law and, certainly, without rewriting or misinterpreting history.

It is through hard-earned wisdom that we lave learned that there can be no true justice without peace or peace without justice. Establishing individual accountability through strong evidential and legal norms is essential. International tribunals and judicial mechanisms can lay the foundations needed to make the voices of victims heard and to record volumes of evidence in the annals of history, but it is up to each society to bring the process of reconciliation to its end.

Respect for, and the protection of, human rights is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and development. Our work in that area should never end. We strongly support and advocate the Human Rights Up Front initiative. Through its candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019, Croatia looks forward to constructively contributing to and strengthening the Council's work in the promotion, protection and further development of human rights.

Croatia will continue to be actively engaged in the United Nations reform process. We commend recent progress in the process of electing the next Secretary-General and strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly. However, the Organization is still lagging behind in terms of what is expected concerning Security Council reform, as highlighted by the number of ongoing, prolonged and nascent crises in the world. We have great expectations for the next Secretary-General. We hope that she or he will give bold impetus to the processes of carrying forward our Organization, making it even more effective, accountable, transparent and, above all, more relevant.

The world has been yearning for inspirational and effective leadership. The solidarity of our global society is deteriorating as problems pile up and hope diminishes. Will we accept that we are creating a world led by feelings of separation, fear and cynicism because we have allowed violence, injustice and crises to prevail? Or will we reverse those trends and choose to achieve a better tomorrow?

Fourteen years from now, our children will not ask us what we planned together or what we signed up to do. Instead, they will ask us what we achieved together and whether we made a difference. And we as leaders need therefore to inspire our citizens again and act together today.

I want to end with a message to all of the children in Croatia and in the world: their voices provide us with guidance and serve as an obligation for all of us who gather here at this permanent meeting point of humankind. Lovro may only be 6 years old, but his voice resonates today in the General Assembly Hall, and he is making a difference.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Medina Sánchez (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to participate once again in the General Assembly on behalf of the people of the Dominican Republic. I wish to begin my remarks with a special recognition of the work of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We appreciate his dedication in the search for solutions to the conflicts that have shaken the world over the past 10 years, and we wish him the best of luck in the new tasks that he will undertake.

The year 2016 is proving to be especially turbulent, with territorial conflicts and open identity-related tensions in various parts of the world. We hope and insist, of course, that the international community will find a peaceful outcome to those conflicts — first and foremost for the sake of the millions of lives that are affected by them. Sometimes the urgency inherent in those tragedies weakens our commitment to address problems that appear to be less pressing but are the most important in the long term.

One such issue, with perhaps the largest scope and greatest potential for long-term transformation, is the fight against poverty and inequality. Over the past two decades, the rapid economic growth brought about by economic globalization has fuelled high expectations in the countries of the South. In fact, it was believed that the prosperity enjoyed by a few countries might finally be within everyone's reach. It should be recognized that those hopes were not unfounded. Indeed, over the course of those two decades, hundreds of millions of people were lifted out of poverty.

But we cannot let ourselves be carried away by excessive optimism. We have an obligation to clarify the scope of those gains in the light of the actual data. We must also expand our horizons to observe those places and areas where globalization has not kept the promises made to humankind.

To begin with, we must remember that all of the hundreds of millions of people who were recently lifted out of poverty did not automatically become part of the middle class, nor did all who were able to do so necessarily remain there. We have, then, a new social segment, a segment that has already been lifted out of poverty, but whose position is much too fragile for us to consider it definitive. The word used to describe the situation of those men and women is "vulnerability" — vulnerability to unemployment, to the illness of a family member, to an economic crisis or a natural disaster, and vulnerability to a series of unforeseen events that could ruin their prospects for the future and return them to poverty in just a short time.

That vulnerable group now includes more than 1.5 billion people around the world, who represent more than 22 per cent of the world's population, according to United Nations statistics. That population is especially large in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the majority of people earn between $4 and $10 a day. The challenge that we face is to strengthen the position of that emerging class. We must provide them with security and give them the tools and skills enabling them not only to develop their own lives, but also to participate in the development of their countries.

Let there be no doubt that new social class offers a great opportunity for our nations. Because of its expanded capacity for consumption and its ability to save, that social class has the potential to become, as has already been noted, an economic growth bonus, similar to the so-called demographic boom that our countries have seen as well. To bolster the emerging middle class will require more complex and better-quality products in all sectors, from infrastructure to education. The path of that class to progress will enable our countries and the entire world to progress.

But in order to realize all of that potential, we must strengthen the safety nets and social supports in the areas of health, education, employment and social security, so as to keep vulnerable individuals from falling back into poverty. If we take that opportunity, not only can those men and women leave their difficulties behind forever, but they can also convert their countries into middle class, democratic and peaceful societies with less need to emigrate abroad. In other words, they can be the key to far-reaching changes on our continent.

Within the framework of the Assembly, the post-2015 development agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goals, provides a good road map for many of the challenges that we face in Latin America, the Caribbean and the world. Our country believes that it is important to work

every day to reduce suffering and to develop strategies to ensure that the path out of poverty is a path of no return. However, in order to accomplish those goals, in order to lift people out of poverty — hundreds of millions of people — more is needed than merely adopting a series of formulas and indicators.

Profound changes must urgently be made to the methods by which trade and financial flows are carried out. That is to say, it is necessary to revise the rules of the game between rich countries and poor countries. We are talking about trade. We live in an age of unprecedented trade openness. My country, the Dominican Republic, like many others, has signed free trade agreements with the major economic blocs, which ought to be mutually beneficial — and in many cases they are. However, if I may say so in all honesty, there are times when the developed countries engage in hypocrisy. After more than half a century in which those countries were protected from everything that other countries were able to produce better, now those countries refuse to reduce protectionism within their borders, whereas under the free trade agreements they require that from their counterparts in developing countries. They want us, the developing countries, to eliminate our protections on industrial goods, but they do not eliminate agricultural subsidies.

For the next five years, for example, the United States will provide an average of $97.8 billion annually to support its agricultural sector, and in its multi-year subsidy policy for the period 2014-2020, the European Union will devote €408 billion to subsidize its agricultural sector. The agricultural protectionism practised by rich countries allows them to influence the market in their favour, while tariffs and trade barriers routinely exclude products from developing countries.

In addition, other non-tariff barriers, such as phytosanitary regulations, are not transparent; they also create additional barriers to farmers in developing countries seeking to enter the global market. The developed countries have allowed those market distortions to persist and have continued to make rhetorical statements in favour of free trade. They should, rather, take concrete steps to attain the ideal of genuine free and fair trade.

Recently, countries such as ours that have signed on to free trade agreements have been forced to revise the terms of our existing agreements because of such protectionist practices that create situations of unequal competition. If the industrialized countries want to be true to their word, they must agree to significantly reduce their protectionism and their subsidies during current trade negotiations and, at the same time, ensure increased funding for rural development.

Just as we should seek greater fairness in trade, we must also ensure that financial flows serve as partners of development and productivity. For some time now, we have been living in an economy where the financial sector is becoming increasingly important. That is a reality that brings as many opportunities as dangers. We were all able to see, for example, how a purely financial crisis like the one that broke out in the 2008, following the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, was able to jeopardize years or decades of development efforts in many of our countries.

We have also had the opportunity to confirm how the free movement of capital can be used for the purposes of tax evasion or money-laundering. The Dominican Republic, like many of the countries present in the Assembly today, can only benefit from more stable, predictable and better regulated financial markets. Therefore, this year, we have begun to adopt the anti-money laundering recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America. Those measures include greater supervision of financial institutions, greater transparency of the legal status of persons, ensuring the legitimate ownership of assets, monitoring wire transfers, documenting retention policies, creating a framework for international cooperation and providing mutual legal assistance, among other measures, for making the Dominican banking system safer and more transparent.

It is worth noting that news such as the recent European Union ruling ordering the technology company Apple to pay €13 billion in unpaid taxes plainly demonstrates a reality that we have long known, namely, that tax havens do not necessarily exist only in sunny Caribbean countries. Quite the contrary, the great majority are under the jurisdiction of the richest countries. Moreover, contrary to the widespread idea that tax havens are merely places to conceal money, they are primarily platforms from which to conduct financial and trade operations in global capital markets. That is to say, it is not money stowed under the mattress but rather an integral part of the real economy that siphons resources from it and robs States of their prerogative of fiscal sovereignty.

The lack of regulation has paved the way for tax evaders and has made the work of tax authorities more complex. It constitutes a major threat to State funding worldwide, which undermines the ability of Governments to meet their enormous responsibilities to their citizens. We therefore applaud any initiatives that promote greater regulation of tax havens. We also know that the regulation of tax havens must be part and parcel of a larger system of effective public regulation and monitoring of financial markets, so that they can serve the real economy and its citizens.

It is our responsibility to continue to try to lift millions of people out of poverty, but we must do so by setting education, health, employment and social-security policies that build on past successes and enable us to forge ahead. We will continue to be committed to the global exchange of goods and services, but let us ensure that those exchanges are fair and on a level playing field. We will open the floodgates of investment, thereby multiplying possibilities for production, research and growth, but let us also ensure fairness and transparency so that, in the medium and long term, our investment and growth will be in the service of the vast majority rather than a select few.

Let us build the necessary consensus to humanize the global economy. Let us bring the openness that we demand in finance to the regulation of migration flows. Let us use the same creativity and enthusiasm that we bring to launching lucrative businesses to finding solutions for those most in need. The millions of people who have recently emerged from poverty are the best proof that great things can be achieved when there is political will. Those millions of men and women are also our best partners and the primary reason to continue our work. We have made great strides, but there is a long road ahead of us. The steps ahead will require boldness and honesty. We must do away with taboos, rethink paradigms and redefine the rules of the game. Our country is committed to substantially reducing inequalities, but not only between the richest and poorest inhabitants of our countries, but also in reshaping the international relations between poor and rich countries.

Let us sit together for a dialogue based on mutual respect, equality and for the common good, without any privileges. Let us do so convinced that that is the only way that humankind can prevail. The time of zero-sum games is over. It is time for all of us to add value. It is time to form alliances that seek to build and where all allies are equal. The international community can always count on the Dominican Republic to help along that path and to work in the service of the vast majority, who needs us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sirisena (*spoke in Sinhalese; English text provided by the delegation*): I am extremely happy to take part in the seventy-first session of the General Assembly as the President of Sri Lanka.

I would like to convey the current situation in my country. For the past 20 months, my leadership has helped usher in a new era of social, political and economic transformations in my country. Before I came to power, people in my country were living in fear and suspicion. I have laid the foundation for strengthening the rule of law and restoring democratic rights for the people of Sri Lanka so that they can live happily in a free and democratic society. My Government seeks to make the people of Sri Lanka among the happiest people on Earth. To that end, we have taken steps to strengthen freedom and democracy while achieving economic prosperity. The Government is committed to making the people of Sri Lanka a developed nation.

Poverty is a global challenge. I am determined to alleviate poverty in my country. I have therefore declared 2017 to be the Year of Eliminating Poverty in Sri Lanka. I have developed a basic platform to help

people emerge from poverty in a country that prioritizes economic progress. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development serves as the guiding principles for all nations and institutions, led by the United Nations, to bring about the economic, social and environmental transformations that will make the world a better place. In that regard, we recognize that economic development plays a key role, and that environmental sustainability, particularly the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, will remain a main pillar in our endeavour to bring about the necessary changes in my country. With the educated younger generations in mind, Sri Lanka's national development strategy will give prominence to building a green and innovation-based economy through progressive reforms and planning.

As an island nation, Sri Lanka wishes to make maximum use of its ocean resources, with a new emphasis on ocean research, tourism, fisheries and marine resources. The Government seeks to further improve the free health-care and education systems, while providing greater technology to agriculture and domestic industry, so as to ensure that our people live better lives.

In many parts of the world, we see the unfortunate proliferation of anger, hatred, brutality and conflict. I would say that contemporary society is experiencing a crisis of morality. I believe that all States should heed the cry for moral values and that every society must dedicate itself to raising the level of positive moral values.

Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country where Theravada Buddhism is practiced. The teachings of the Buddha help us find solutions to many of the burning issues of the contemporary world. Similarly, I am sure that the wisdom offered by the great world religions — such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and others — can help us today. I am therefore of the view that we as States must strengthen and foster those religions and philosophies that help us look inward.

I take this opportunity to draw the attention of this gathering to a significant obstacle in our progress as the world community, that is, the menace of drugs and intoxicants that has beset society, including youth and schoolchildren. As the President of Brazil pointed out (see A/71/PV.8), illicit drugs have become the most serious challenge faced by society today. While endorsing his ideas, I would urge the world community, the United Nations and all States to commit to fighting illegal drugs collectively and individually through a robust international programme that is more organized and stronger than the one currently in place.

On the domestic front, my Government has taken effective measures to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and good governance, paving the way for positive change to ensure that war will never again take place on the soil of my country, Sri Lanka. The reconciliation process under way today has taken lessons learned from the bitter experience of a brutal war that lasted three decades. The process will ensure that my country will never again see the cruelty of war or terrorism and that all communities will live peacefully in a rational and a free-thinking Sri Lanka. For that noble purpose, Sri Lanka welcomes the collaboration and blessings that it has received from international organizations and the international community.

Sri Lanka is a free, independent nation, and I intend to preserve and protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the policies of all of the other nations gathered here today. As such, my country will seek its own recipe for the reconciliation process and the necessary transformation and reform efforts, based on respect for the essential indigenous thinking of the local people. Sri Lanka will adhere to a social democratic policy and work closely with the international community towards prosperity and wisdom, in line with the rest of the world.

Following the war that traumatized the nation for three decades, we have started the journey towards national reconciliation and lasting peace. However, we will not hurry; rather, we will tread each step with care, vigilance, patience and persistence. My beloved Sri Lanka has big dreams. I look forward to the blessings and collaboration of Member States to achieve them.

I thank the United Nations and its agencies for the ongoing support provided to Sri Lanka. I am honoured to mention the contributions made by the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in fostering international development and strengthening democracy and human rights. Those efforts are a blessing to humankind.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize my commitment to empowering our youth with the best knowledge in the world. We are also embarking upon a reconciliation programme, with a view to Sri Lanka becoming an exemplary democracy in the world. My Government will fulfil its responsibilities towards its people, and

I seek Member States' assistance and blessings in that noble endeavour.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Peter M. Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Peter M. Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Peter M. Christian, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Christian: As Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji assumes the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, I wish to recognize that historic occasion for Pacific islanders, and express my congratulations to him and his country. I would also like to thank outgoing President Mogens Lykketoft for his leadership during the General Assembly at its seventieth session, during which I made my first appearance here at the United Nations. At that time, I said that holding on to the podium gave me a sense of security and hope that all of us were thinking in the same direction (see A/70/PV.22).

After 10 years of service, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon deserves great praise for his effective leadership, during which he championed many issues important to small island developing States, including generating the political momentum needed to address climate change and his push to catalyse the initial capitalization of the Green Climate Fund. Sadly, the funds, generously contributed, have been slow in flowing to needy States, thereby contributing to painful delays in the implementation of mitigation and adaptation projects.

The Federated States of Micronesia today celebrates its twenty-fifth year of membership in the Organization. At the time we joined, following the end of the Cold War, there was a great sense of optimism that the long-standing obstacles to world peace and progress had been relegated to the past. Today, while there has been progress towards the great goals of the Organization, it must be said without hesitation that much remains to be done.

The reform of our United Nations, most important that of the Security Council, has remained on the agenda now for a quarter of a century, which evokes characteristics of an era that needs forgetting. Twenty-five years ago, the small island developing States cried out for action against human-induced climate change, while stressing that we literally faced extinction as nations and as oceanic cultures, owing to surging sea levels and the related consequences. I must concede that our voices have not been entirely unheard. We stand today, at last, many nations united to confront this dark, glaring reality. However, even in the relatively short span of 25 years the relentless advance of climate change has outpaced our efforts to deal with it — so that today, while all countries must consider themselves vulnerable, the small island developing States are dealing with an already clear and present danger — the adverse impact of climate change.

Over the years of my country's membership in this union of hope, we have observed what I would refer to as glacial progress, were it not for the fact that the glaciers themselves are now melting. Nevertheless, we, along with everyone in this Hall, must remain committed to the great mandates that we so boldly assigned ourselves: the eradication of poverty, the advancement of international peace and security, universal adherence to human rights principles, the protection of our oceans and their resources, and better stewardship of our entire planet.

The list goes on, and it is familiar to all of us. We read it out each year at the general debate and in conference halls around the world. Yet, despite our proclamations and declarations, we seem to be pivoting not too far from where we started. Our peoples look to us for progress beyond repetitive words.

On the issue of international refugees, Pacific Islanders live in a zone that emanates peace, and it

pains us that the global menace of terrorism continues to spread worldwide. It seems that we are helpless to stop the tide of fear and violence — fear that affects millions of innocent civilians, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, to the point that they must suppress their human dignity and knock on a stranger's door to seek shelter from the turmoil of war. The question is, will we answer?

As small island countries in the Pacific and as members of this family of nations, we plead with the Security Council to take greater action and respond to that global crisis, if not for the mothers and fathers, then at least for the children, whose innocence allows them to play between tents and be happy at the sight of strange food in a bowl.

We would like to know what is happening with the ceasefire in Syria. Even from the Pacific, we have an interest in that question. What are the United States and Russia doing about it? What is Syria doing about it? We know they have the power to do more, and we ask them to please do so.

On the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is part of the Asia-Pacific region, the Federated States of Micronesia is concerned about the peace and long-term stability of the region. Together with other nations, the Federated States of Micronesia condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing provocative actions and rhetoric. Unchecked, the Pacific Ocean, the same ocean that we speak of saving for all our sakes, may become a battleground. One truly wonders why Beijing and Moscow seem unconcerned that a missile could stray their way. I ask them to please intercede on behalf of all of us. On that note, the people of Micronesia look forward to the day when nuclear weapons will become a thing of the past, remembered only with great disdain and regret.

On the issue of Security Council reform, I have heard the phrase "fit for purpose" often used at the United Nations. We continue to see the need for a reformed United Nations that is not only fit for purpose, but also dynamic, changing its modus operandi to keep in step with changing world circumstances, accepting new methods like Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's example of a smartphone on the first day of the general debate (see A/71/PV.8), and needing to move in pace with changes. The United Nations must be able to focus on preventive diplomacy around the world and not be limited to dealing with hot spots. I totally agree with that position. And yes, the United Nations must be a catalyst for peace — a peacekeeper, more than a peacemaker. The Security Council, entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, must adapt to modern times and reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. However, as an arm of the United Nations, the Council can be credible and effective only if properly empowered and adequately supported by Member States. In that regard, the Federated States of Micronesia reiterates its support for the Group of Four countries being made permanent members of the Council.

It is interesting how we stand at this rostrum and talk about disabilities. In that regard, I have noticed that many of us leaders who come up here to speak also seem to have disabilities. We are colour-blind, unable to see the difference between green and red. I apologize for that, and I will try to be brief.

The Group of Asia and the Pacific Small Island Developing States has long advocated for climate and security to become a regular focus of the Security Council. The Group also submitted a proposal on the subject to the World Humanitarian Summit, calling for a special representative in the United Nations system to be dedicated to the issue of climate and security. Momentum appears to be on our side, and we hope that the Secretary-General, while he is still with us, will appoint such a special representative, adding to his legacy as a champion of climate change.

The selection of a new Secretary-General should involve the whole membership. That would help to ensure that the new head of the Organization has the political support of all Members and is responsive, responsible and effective on behalf of all, not just select, elite, nations.

On sustainable development, the work of the United Nations rests on three pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. This is the first year of implementation after the international community adopted a number of milestone agreements in 2015 — on disaster-risk reduction, financing for development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

From the High-level Political Forum exercise held in July, we learned that integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our national plans will be daunting, and that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Presenting a true picture of our national

circumstances should not be a burden on small island developing States. In addition, the United Nations should consider the statistics for countries with fewer than 100,000 people, so as to ensure an inclusive process and so that truly no one is left behind. Many of the challenges before the United Nations can be addressed only through the collective work of its membership. Support and partnerships are recognized as essential to making the SDGs universal and transformative for lives on the ground, and national ownership is critical.

On the issue of fisheries and oceans, while we may be known as Pacific small island developing States here at the United Nations, there is another term that we often use, which is "big ocean States". The Federated States of Micronesia alone has 607 islands, spread across 3 million square kilometres of the Pacific. We are custodians of some of the world's richest biodiversity and marine resources, and have pledged to conserve 30 per cent of our near-shore marine areas under the Micronesia Challenge, a regional effort to preserve the natural resources that are crucial to the survival of Pacific traditions, cultures and livelihoods. Our conservation efforts directly benefit my country's sustainable use of its ocean fisheries.

Speaking of cultural preservation, I would like to thank UNESCO for its recent designation of our ancient ruins of Nan Madol as a UNESCO World Heritage site, a feat of construction that truly matches, if not surpasses, the wonders of the Egyptian Pyramids. As for climate change, the United Nations remains the last and best hope for galvanizing the necessary political will and commitment for advancing our global agenda on climate change. From this rostrum and elsewhere, leaders from small island developing States, like many others, have called upon the States Members of our Organization, especially world leaders, to step up and take charge by calling for the urgently needed mitigation and financing initiatives to implement climate-change agreements.

Current Government commitments fall considerably short of even reaching the 2°C goal that we agreed to in Paris. The recent ratification of the Paris Agreement by more than 30 countries, including virtually all Pacific island countries, raises our hopes and expectations that others will soon follow suit.

On the issue of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, standing here one year ago, I described the Federated States of Micronesia's long-standing efforts to amend the Protocol to phase down hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) use, and I thanked new supporters and noted that the proposals were finally bearing fruit (see A/70/PV.22). HFCs are the fastest-growing greenhouse gases in the world. They are also extremely potent, producing warming effects hundreds to thousands of times greater than those of carbon dioxide per ton. Phasing down HFCs will help prevent warming emissions equivalent to almost 100 billion tons of carbon dioxide by 2050. Thanks to the many countries that have supported the phase-out proposal, as set forth in the Montreal Protocol, that crusade has gained new momentum.

Like others, I welcome the progress in the diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. My country, too, has established diplomatic relations with Cuba, but even if we had not entered into that relationship for sovereign recognition and partnership, we, the Federated States of Micronesia, a State Member of the United Nations, would still lend our strong support to resolution 70/120. We ask the United States to accelerate its consideration of and process towards lifting the embargo imposed on Cuba. Along the same lines, I applaud the peace accord reached among the people of Colombia. There may be sceptics as to the truce's viability, but let us give peace a chance by applauding the great effort and praying for its success. ¡Viva Colombia!

Every year, before coming to the General Assembly, the Pacific Islands Forum meets to review and recommend our positions on issues worthy of bringing before the Assembly. Earlier this month, Heads of State and Government convened for the forty-seventh annual meeting of the Forum in Micronesia. At that meeting, French Polynesia and New Caledonia were seated as full members of the Forum, while the Federated States of Micronesia became a member of the small island States. Climate change, oceans, health and human rights and partnership featured prominently on our agenda. On climate change, the Forum reaffirmed its position that achieving the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting the average global temperature increase to 1.5°C degrees above pre-industrial levels is an existential matter for many Forum members, and that it must be addressed with paramount urgency. The Forum also observed that the Paris Agreement must be brought into force before the end of 2016, or as soon as possible, even tomorrow.

On oceans, the Forum reaffirmed that the Pacific region's most important natural resource is our ocean.

To that end, the Forum leaders endorsed the Pohnpei Oceans Statement: A Course to Sustainability. In the Statement, the Forum reaffirmed that the ocean is the basis for the livelihoods of Pacific peoples, and further noted the valuable opportunity presented by the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The Statement further urges the timely and comprehensive conclusion of the Preparatory Committee process, established to make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly on the elements of a draft text of an international, legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

On fisheries, the Forum called for action to end illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and associated activities, including high-seas bunkering, human trafficking, and illicit trade. The Forum further urged flag States to exercise more diligent efforts in carrying out their flag-State responsibilities and maintaining control of their nationals.

Our faith in the Organization rests not on the hope that its goals can be reached within a certain time frame, whether it be 25 years or 71 years. Rather, it rests on our confidence that nothing is impossible among like-minded nations willing to unite in sustained efforts. In that regard, this Organization, the greatest convocation ever devised by man, will continue to light our way and that of future generations.

I will end my remarks with a quotation. Right after the First World War, President Wilson wanted to see the creation of an organization that would prevent all future wars. In that regard, he said,

> "A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike."

An evident principle ran through the whole programme, namely, the principle of justice for all peoples and nationalities and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another — whether they be strong or weak.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Peter M. Christian, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vējonis: This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Latvia's independence and membership in the United Nations. My country took its rightful place at the United Nations in 1991, with the clear objective of making a contribution to the collective security, stability and prosperity of the world. As a responsible democratic State based on the rule of law and respect for human dignity and freedom, Latvia remains strongly committed to the essential work of the United Nations.

The United Nations has been, and will be, our platform for global engagement. The far-reaching agreements on sustainable development and climate change have restored trust in the multilateral system's ability to deliver solutions on pressing global issues. More than ever, the world has great expectations that the United Nations will meet the rising challenges for peace and development and deliver effective and prompt results.

Last year, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we all pledged to leave no one behind. This promise supports poverty eradication and development efforts in the most challenging contexts. It means addressing persistent vulnerabilities and building resilience in complex, protracted crises and conflict-affected populations. Therefore, strengthening

the development and security nexus must become our mission.

All people have the right to live in peace and security in their own countries. Conflicts, poverty, disasters and climate change have contributed to the rise of large movements of refugees and migrants. Some 125 million people around the world are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. The current unprecedented migration crisis cannot be addressed by the most affected countries alone; it is a global phenomenon that requires joint efforts and shared responsibility. The global commitment to shared responsibility shown at the United Nations summit held on Monday goes hand in hand with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable solutions must be found to ensure opportunities for education, employment and business for persons forcibly displaced during protracted crises and conflicts and to provide support for host communities and countries.

The development of peaceful and inclusive societies, good governance and respect for human rights will also help us to tackle the spread of violent extremism, while military and security measures are necessary to combat Da'esh and similar groups. We need to address the root causes of people's willingness to choose violent extremism.

Latvia is part of the global coalition against Da'esh that has been instrumental in combating the group in Iraq and Syria. We welcome the NATO decision to step up support for the efforts of the coalition to that end. Only unified, coordinated, collective action at the global, regional and national levels will help us succeed in confronting the new, unconventional threats.

Terrorist attacks continue almost daily. Fighting terrorism must remain our priority. The international community needs a plan for building resilience in the communities that for years have suffered under the barbaric rule of Da'esh. The willingness of local populations will also be required if their future is to be shaped by the primacy of the rule of law and human rights, thus countering the factors conducive to radicalization, extremism and terrorism.

We will not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without sustaining peace and preventing conflict. The need for decisive political action to address and prevent the conflict that causes massive displacement and suffering is more urgent than ever. The international community must find political solutions.

The security challenges in the Middle East are marked by a high degree of complexity, spillover and refugee flows. After five years of civil war, Syria has been destroyed. Attacks against civilians, medical facilities and schools continue. This is unacceptable. The perpetrators of international crimes must be brought to justice. A real nationwide ceasefire and improved humanitarian access are the prerequisite for the resumption of talks. Latvia has provided its contribution to mitigating the consequences of the conflict. However, only credible and inclusive political solutions will return Syria to stability. All members of the International Syria Support Group must put their political weight behind the United Nations-led process.

In Libya, the institutional vacuum has created a breeding ground for terrorist groups such as Da'esh. The unification and cohesion of rival parties in Libya is a key element for the country's long-term stability and its success in the fight against terrorists.

Iran's diligent implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency will contribute to greater stability in the Middle East. In contrast, North Korea's irresponsible actions, including its repeated nuclear tests, undermine the security of all countries in the region and beyond.

We support all recent international efforts aimed at making progress towards the resumption of the Middle East peace process and find common ground that will bring the two parties back to meaningful dialogue. There is no alternative to a two-State solution reached through peace negotiations.

Ensuring long-term stability in Afghanistan is of vital importance for global and regional security. Adverse developments in that country can have spillover effects on the neighbouring countries of Central Asia, which undermines their potential to develop economic connectivity at the macroregional level. Latvia provides Afghanistan with political and financial support for reform in the country. We call on more active regional cooperation, together with continued international support, to sustain the growth and prosperity of Afghanistan and its people.

In many other countries, the political situation is highly volatile, and some are engulfed in conflict.

The United Nations and its peace efforts can help to stabilize these countries and gradually bring them back to normalcy.

We support the United Nations in its aim to make peacekeeping more effective through updating available tools for meeting new challenges. Better planning, equipment and training will improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping and the protection of civilians. There should be greater focus on strengthened collaboration with regional organizations. Building upon experience from other international operations, Latvia is now involved for the first time in a United Nations peacekeeping operation, in Mali.

This is still a very turbulent time for European security. For Latvia, the stability and security of Europe's neighbours in the East is a strategic priority and remains high on our political agenda. The resolution of protracted conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh should have priority on the international agenda. We must remain vigilant and insist that all States, including Russia, abide by their obligations under international law with regard to respecting the borders of sovereign States.

Together with the international community, Latvia will continue to stand for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We refuse to recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation; it must end. Any discrimination against the Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea requires a firm reaction from the United Nations. The international community must work to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. All parties must fulfil their commitments under the Minsk agreements and make the Minsk process work. Latvia continues to support Ukraine in its reforms and with its humanitarian needs.

The United Nations capacity to address current challenges also depends on the political will to make progress on the necessary reform of the Security Council, which is long overdue. We should all be aiming to strengthen the legitimacy of this important body. Accordingly, the permanent members of the Security Council should refrain from using their veto power in situations involving atrocity crimes. Latvia supports not only this important initiative, but also the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct on Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

We are determined to maintain the political momentum for climate action. In April of this year, Latvia signed the historic Paris Agreement. We will strive to ratify the Agreement as soon as possible and encourage others to do the same. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been driving the push for worldwide action on climate change and gender equality. Latvia is grateful to him for his leadership and dedication over the past decade.

The scope of challenges that the world faces is daunting. The bold global agenda requires leadership. The expectations placed on the next Secretary-General of the United Nations are therefore as high as ever. This important job requires courage and readiness to effectively tackle the issues that we face. While we are looking for the best-qualified candidate, we also recall that Eastern Europe is the only region that has never held the post of Secretary-General. I am equally convinced that after 70 years, it is time to choose a woman for the Organization's top job.

Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

There are many challenges that shape the evolving global landscape, but we now see the clear outlines of the new and better world that can be reached through diligent implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Implementation of the new Agenda will not be easy. Only through an informed and active society, in true partnership with all stakeholders, and through review of the progress made, will we be able to achieve the necessary transformative change by 2030. This is the time for us to act together responsibly. Latvia will continue to play its part in shaping a better future for us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Adress by Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Izetbegović: Peace and security, human rights and development are the pillars of the United Nations — a founding promise to the world that this Organization was created to safeguard. Yet our world today is anything but peaceful and secure; it is marred by injustice, inequality and intolerance, each of which erodes the foundations of human society. We are witnessing human suffering on an unprecedented scale, suffering that reaches far beyond national boundaries and capacities to deal with it. Poverty, hunger, disease, natural disasters and climate change afflict millions of our fellow human beings. Many States and societies are trapped in protracted conflicts, with cycles of violence claiming countless victims.

We are facing the worst forced displacement crisis since the Second World War. Some 60 million people have been forced to flee their homes because of wars, persecution and human-rights violations. They are scattered around the world with their livelihoods and communities shattered to pieces and their nations and cultures torn apart. Robbed of their dignity and living in despair in refugee camps, they are compelled to seek a better future on the borders of other countries. They are not faceless statistics, but human beings with every right to a future free of violence and a future full of hope and opportunity. Their tragedy is our tragedy; their future is our future.

This crisis requires not only a humanitarian response but a sustainable political solution. It requires stronger political leadership and resolve, as well as a rethinking of policy, operational and financing strategies at national, regional and international levels. However, all too often, narrow national interests impede the formulation of such joint responses. When crises, such as the current refugee and migrant crisis in the Middle East and in Europe, transcend borders we must look at the big picture — not merely from the standpoint of national interests — because the consequences of our actions and omissions resonate beyond our borders.

As a country that had hundreds of thousands of its citizens suffer the plight of being forced out of their homes, Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches great significance to addressing this challenge. We recognize the importance and timely organization of the summit for refugees and migrants, and we welcome the adoption of the outcome document (resolution 71/1) that is clearly linked to the 2030 Agenda. We hope that the commitments made by Member States at that meeting will have meaningful impact on the ground. In the 2030 Agenda, we pledged to ensure that no one is left behind and committed to empowering the most vulnerable.

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the 2030 Agenda. As a newly elected member of the Economic and Social Council, we will play an active role in the implementation of this transformative blueprint for change. Our ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will depend on the availability of support for national implementation — primarily from the revised and improved Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, which must be a true global platform for the exchange of best practices in the fields of finance, trade, technology and capacity-building among Member States. We support the Global Mechanism and the monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will outline critical milestones towards a coherent and inclusive follow-up and review of the Agenda at the global level.

The 2030 Agenda requires us to achieve transformation not only for the sake of the people but also for the sake of the planet. Our development must not come at the expense of our habitat. Unless we urgently take coordinated global action to reverse existing patterns of environmental degradation and climate change, we risk endangering a desired future for generations to come. Fulfilling the commitments of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is critical to protecting development outcomes and adapting to the consequences of natural disasters and climate change through risk-informed development. Bosnia and Herzegovina is already implementing its Climate Change Adaptation and Low-Emission Development Strategy, with the aim of becoming a viable and advanced green economy by 2025.

But we need to stay alert. The 2030 Agenda is not the answer to all our problems. There is always room for inequality and injustice to thrive if our approach, acceptance and implementation are not cohesive and

unified. What we make of the 2030 Agenda and how we build upon it will determine its results in improving equal opportunity for all people.

Human rights are at the heart of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, from eradicating poverty to reducing inequality and promoting inclusive societies. As we start to bring people in from the margins, we must strive to put human rights at the centre of our actions, as they are the most powerful driving forces of peace and development. The SDGs are the gold standard we are committed to upholding so that our people can enjoy dignity, freedom and equality. They are a moral and legal framework that empowers people everywhere to fight injustice anywhere.

We are deeply concerned about the erosion of world peace and security caused by new and protracted conflicts, especially in the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for over 60 years, has been the primary and constant source of instability in the Middle East. A new impetus for negotiations is urgently needed. We strongly support efforts to hold a peace conference that would bring a lasting and just resolution to this conflict, based on the principles of international law and reaching a consensus on the peaceful coexistence of two independent States.

International peace and stability are being dramatically undermined by the violence and crimes against the Syrian people. It is deeply troubling that the most influential global and regional actors have so far failed to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the Geneva peace talks and the efforts of the International Syria Support Group to find a political solution to this conflict. The peaceful future of Syria rests upon respecting the will of the Syrian people and allowing them to express that will in democratic elections.

The so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has severely destabilized Syria, Iraq and the broader Middle East, posing a grave threat to international security. Its ideology, objectives and actions are contrary to all values and norms of our civilization. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the atrocities, systematic abuses of human rights and violations of international law committed by ISIL. As a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to contribute within our means to international efforts to defeat this terrorist organization.

Terrorism is a global threat that affects us all. No State or society is immune to it, and no State alone can counter it. With violent extremism on the rise and a growing number of foreign fighters, terrorism is becoming an increasingly difficult challenge that requires a comprehensive response involving the collaboration of all States, employing both preventative and security measures. We face a problem that has deep and complex roots, that transcends national boundaries, and that cannot, and should not, be associated with any one religion, nationality or ethnic group. Those who perpetrate, organize and inspire terrorist attacks, claiming to do so in the name of Islam, want to turn Islam into an ideology of global fear. Violent extremism and terrorism are unacceptable from the viewpoint of any religion, including Islam. They undermine Islam's system of values and its universal teachings of tolerance and coexistence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is strongly committed to combating terrorism in all its forms. We are deeply concerned with the rise of violent extremism, and attach a great importance to countering it. We welcome the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism as another useful tool in a comprehensive whole-of-United Nations approach to preventing violent extremism. The prevention of extremism and the promotion of human rights are inextricably linked. Inclusive governance and respect for the rule of law are of paramount importance. Political, economic and social injustices around the world contribute to the rise of despair and hopelessness, creating a fertile ground for the emergence of radicalism and violent extremism.

In the imperfect world in which we live, injustice is constantly growing, but actions that cause further injustice are not the right response. Our Governments must and will respond to violence with forceful and repressive measures. However, if that part of our response is not carried out precisely and selectively, with respect for human rights and the rule of law, it will only cause a new wave of radicalization. The real fight and ultimate victory must and can be reached solely on the ideological level.

Our approach and strategy must be holistic. We must apply a wide range of policies and measures that address the economic and social conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism that terrorist organizations exploit to drive recruitment and radicalization. In particular, we must work harder to eliminate discrimination, prejudice and xenophobia in

our societies, reduce poverty and inequality, improve education and expand opportunities, especially for our younger generations.

The engagement of the United Nations has never been more critical, as we face unprecedented challenges in confronting the surge in violence in various forms around the world. Global action, guided by the principles of international law, is required to put an end to the violence and instability in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya and other crisis areas. Ensuring the protection of civilians and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law is imperative. Neutrality and indifference lead to resentment and frustration, further emboldening those who leave devastation and sorrow in their wake.

Humanitarian aid can never serve as a substitute for solutions that address the root causes of conflict, nor can it create the necessary conditions for lasting peace and stability. The main causes of modern conflicts are discrimination and exclusion, failures of governance, impunity, deep-rooted poverty and the lack of opportunity, aggravated by the growing effects of climate change. In our increasingly interconnected world, we can no longer keep the impact of faraway conflicts outside our borders, nor can we ignore their global consequences. Our past failures, which came at a very high human cost, should have taught us how to better prevent and end conflicts. The scenes from Syria or the Mediterranean shores are a painful reminder that we have not learned those lessons and are still failing to turn our promises into actions.

We must act upon early-warning signs of potential conflict. It is critically important to develop and strengthen shared frameworks for conflict-risk analysis, including early-warning mechanisms at the local, national, regional and international levels. Bosnia and Herzegovina encourages the better use of Articles 34 and 99 of the Charter of the United Nations by the Security Council in order to place greater emphasis on preventive diplomacy in situations that could give rise to conflict or threaten international peace and security. Early United Nations engagement and use of the Secretary-General's good offices, combined with regional mediation efforts, can also substantially reduce the risk of conflict. We support the United Nations in convening an international conflict-prevention forum by 2020, and we urge the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive United Nations plan to strengthen conflict prevention.

We recognize the value of introducing United Nations peacebuilding efforts at an early stage, alongside peacekeeping activities. The contemporary peace and security environment demands increasingly complex peacekeeping missions with coherent mandates that effectively correspond to situations on the ground. We are proud to have contributed to the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Congo and in Mali with our military peacekeepers and with police officers in South Sudan, Liberia, Cyprus and Afghanistan, nearly a quarter of whom were women.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply committed to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, multilateralism and the settling of international disputes and conflicts through peaceful means. Using the advantages of our geopolitical position as a bridge between the East and the West and a meeting point of civilizations, we want to advance dialogue and understanding and forge partnerships with friendly countries around the world. We strongly value and are committed to regional and subregional cooperation and remain active in a number of regional initiatives focusing on peacebuilding, migration, cross-border security and development issues.

At home and abroad, we will continue to uphold and promote good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We will continue advocating the use of all available legal mechanisms to seek and achieve justice for all victims of crimes against humanity, because we believe that truth and justice are prerequisites for achieving lasting reconciliation, peace and security.

In the past year we have seen a renewed sense of unity and unprecedented levels of commitment. We acceded to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda for Humanity and the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We have collectively committed ourselves to the betterment of humankind with our renewed focus on conflict prevention and resolution and our strengthened efforts towards sustainable development, equal opportunity for all, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Peace and security cannot be detached from either development or environmental agendas. Peace is not

merely the absence of violence. It is freedom from fear and insecurity. There can be no lasting peace and security when injustice and inequality are an everyday experience for millions of people or when basic rights and freedoms are denied to so many human beings. The resulting grievances make our States unstable and our societies vulnerable and readily fuel extremism, radicalization and violence. Injustice and inequality diminish the human potential of our communities, leaving development and prosperity beyond their reach.

The road towards progress goes from ending poverty to reducing inequality and building just, equitable, tolerant, open and inclusive societies, with respect for human rights and the promotion of the rule of law at the core of our every action. History will judge us by the difference we make in the lives of millions of people who are suffering from marginalization, discrimination, poverty, malnutrition, disease, natural disasters and climate change. We must listen to their voices and respond to their needs, hopes and aspirations. We must find the will and courage to take urgent actions to turn the agendas we agreed upon into instruments of true global change, honouring our pledge to humankind and leaving a legacy true to our values.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vaz (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour and privilege for me to be addressing the Assembly for the first time since I took office as President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

First allow me to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly at this session, and to wish him the greatest success in his work. I also thank his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, for his excellent work during the previous session. I would also like express our appreciation for the theme chosen for this session, under President Thomson's important sponsorship, which focuses on the issue of sustainable development.

Guinea-Bissau believes that this session is an opportunity to strengthen the commitments made as well as the division of responsibilities among all international actors in pursuit of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (resolution 69/313) for development financing, approved by the General Assembly in July 2015, gave rise to fresh hope with regard to financing for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The commitments made by the parties must be respected. The goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda are complementary and must be harmonized and aligned.

My country is strongly committed to doing our part in implementing the commitments made in the context of global and regional strategies. Thus we are proud of the fact that our national development plan is in line with many of the Goals of the Agenda and also of the political will demonstrated by the national authorities to gradually adjust this strategic plan in order to fully accommodate the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Guinea-Bissau has very important natural capital to leverage for our development and for the preservation of the environment in the West Africa ecoregion. Thus biodiversity has become an axis that cuts across all other aspects of my country's development.

Allow me to take this opportunity to briefly share with the Assembly the current political situation and the efforts that have been made to overcome the institutional challenges that our country faces, particularly our political authorities.

Just before I left to attend this session, thanks to the mediation of the Heads of State of Guinea Conakry and Sierra Leone, who were in my country recently, in accordance with a decision reached at the Conference

of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held in Dakar, an agreement was signed with a view to overcoming the current roadblocks in our Parliament. The agreement was signed by the President of the National Popular Assembly, the Prime Minister and the two main political parties.

The understanding reached deserves the full support of the President of the Republic, ECOWAS and other partners of Guinea-Bissau as an important step toward the easing of political tensions and a consensus platform that will allow us to ensure Government stability until the end of the legislative term.

The endorsement of this understanding by the Heads of State of ECOWAS and the international community, which met yesterday to discuss the way forward to implementing the agreement, rauses the hope that all parties are strongly committed to establishing peace and stability so as to allow the agreement to be implemented.

Therefore, allow me to reiterate my commitment to do all that is required, through a frank and open dialogue with all active forces in our country, in order to consolidate an environment of peace and social stability, which are indispensable to a process of stable governance in our country.

I should note, however, that today the Bissau-Guinean crisis is no longer a political and military crisis, but merely, and eminently, a political and institutional crisis. I should also note that, from the outset of my term, not a single shot has been fired by military or paramilitary personnel; no one has been killed or beaten for political reasons; there have been no reported cases of arbitrary arrest; there is freedom of expression, the press and demonstration; and no issues of human rights violations have been raised.

As Supreme Commander of the armed forces, I would also like to reiterate to the Assembly our request for United Nations support for the process of national reconciliation that is under way in our country; for the participation of our armed forces in international peacekeeping missions; for the implementation of safety and security-sector reform, which is of great importance, namely with respect to the control of weapons and the management of materiel; the construction of armories and the renovation of barracks; and the securing of funds for the reintegration of demobilized troops.

The world today faces a tremendous challenge: combating and overcoming the scourges of terrorism, drug trafficking, climate change and other evils that are ravaging our countries. These threats are clear evidence of the security challenges that we face on our shared planet.

Our subregion, West Africa, is also affected by acts of terrorism, which represent an intolerable manifestation of barbarism and of disdain for the most sacred values of humanity. I wish to take this unique opportunity to once again express my country's solidarity with the countries and peoples that are victims of terrorism and reiterate our commitment to them.

Guinea-Bissau welcomes the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and calls for its implementation as a key tool for regulating international dialogue and cooperation among States, which hold in their hands the fate of the planet.

Climate change poses an emerging risk for Guinea-Bissau. We are a coastal country, with an island portion and a high risk of sea-level rise, which poses a great threat to a significant portion of our territory. Therefore, climate change matters are some of the main priorities of our political action. Accordingly, we have great interest in participating in and closely monitoring the High-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 — on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development — which will take place in New York in 2017. The President of the General Assembly is therefore in the right place to fulfil the mission the Assembly has assigned to him in this regard.

In the past year, we have observed an important development in the international context, namely, the rapprochement between the United States and Cuba, which we greatly welcomed. We hope that the normalization of bilateral relations may bring these two friends of Guinea-Bissau closer together. In addition, we call for the implementation of the resolutions calling for a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission for their continued focus on, solidarity with, and ongoing monitoring of Guinea-Bissau, its people and its authorities, even in an environment of multiple and

complex challenges. In addition, on behalf of the people of Guinea-Bissau, I would also like to recognize and thank the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), its Commission and its member States for their political, financial and military support in the process of stabilizing, securing and reforming the safety and security sectors.

I would like to offer a word of appreciation to Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, and special thanks to President Alpha Condé of Guinea for his role in facilitating the dialogue in the political process in Guinea-Bissau. We also offer our profound gratitude to Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of Nigeria, for his unwavering support as head of the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau. I further convey our gratitude to all heads of State in the subregion, who have given a high level of attention to Guinea-Bissau during the years our political crisis persisted.

Our recognition of and gratitude to all other international partners, countries and organizations, namely, the African Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization of la Francophonie, which have always stood with Guinea-Bissau and supported our country in its pursuit of paths leading to stability and development. The support of our international partners, as seen in the results of the Brussels round table in 2015, unequivocally translates into attention to the situation of the State and the people of Guinea-Bissau. As promised, we count on our partners' help to leverage economic development as the engine for peace and stability in our country.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our appreciation for the United Nations and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, which kept their attention on and unflaggingly monitored Guinea-Bissau, our people and our institutions despite the multiple and complex problems that the world is facing. It is with great satisfaction that I highlight the indispensable role of the United Nations, through its representative in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Modibo Touré, whom I thank for his personal dedication to facilitating dialogue and seeking solutions, as well as the strengthened consolidation of the democratic rule of law in Guinea-Bissau.

Finally, I wish the President of the Assembly continued success as he conducts the work of this seventy-first session of the General Assembly on behalf of the States and peoples of the world. May God bless us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zeman: One year ago, here in this Hall, I warned the international community of the threat posed by the spread of international terrorism (see A/70/PV.17). What has happened in the year since then? Paris, Brussels, Dhaka, Istanbul, Orlando, Munich, Nice and New York, again, is what happened.

A few years ago, the number of countries that were influenced by Islamic terrorism was only six. Now, it is 35. The Islamic State is something like a cancer. But it is not only a tumor. Many cancers have metastases, which are more dangerous than the original tumor itself, and this is what we are observing in the spread of radicalism, terrorism and fanaticism. We must now ask, how long are we to wait before we act? How long are we going to be limited to conveying only condolences? How long will we be constrained to make only declarations of solidarity?

I admit that there are some limited actions can be taken against terrorism, but they are, in fact, very

limited, while terrorism is spreading all the time. There are three main risks in this area. The first is that, in the near future, there will be a new Islamic State in Afghanistan. If there is a reduction of NATO forces in Afghanistan, a victory by the Taliban is highly probable. If that were to happen, we can expect to see the same level of cruelty from the Taliban as that which we have seen from Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and the Al-Nusra Front and others.

The second risk is the extremization or radicalization of the population, which is still quite unstable. Let me cite one unpleasant example. In the 1930s, in Germany, the population was also quite unstable despite the fact that it was a very cultivated population. After all, Germany is the nation of Goethe and Schiller. Over the course of a few years, this very decent nation became one of fanatical Nazis. It only took a few years. We must admit that such radicalization or extremization is also possible today.

The third risk stems from our hesitation and our lack of courage in carrying out decisive actions. My country, though small, has troops in Afghanistan, Mali and other parts of the world. That, however, is not enough. What we need is the coordinated action of most if not all States Members of the United Nations. But what can be done until that happens? Let me cite another example.

What we need is a solid, firm, comprehensive United Nations platform on international terrorism. A proposal for such a platform was put forward by India in the year 2000 — 16 years ago. Sixteen years later, we are still discussing how international terrorism should be defined. International lawyers have literally been discussing this issue for 16 years.

Thank God I am not an international lawyer. I say that because, for me, a terrorist is anybody who intentionally kills innocent civilian people. It is that simple: "Elementary, my dear Watson", as they say. Unfortunately, the United Nations has been discussing a programme — and the definition of international terrorism — for 16 years. As a result, I have some doubts about the efficiency of this international Organization. I hope the Acting President will excuse me for being so blunt. Obviously, this state of affairs is not satisfactory; we do not have the platform we need.

Last year, I proposed the creation of an international force, equipped with drones, helicopters and air rangers and using improved communication among national secret services. I was very happy to learn that the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, our French colleague, proposed the same thing: using the experience with drones and helicopters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to wage the fight against jihadists. What we need is not massive territorial operations — those have led to bad experiences in Iraq, Syria and Libya, where we were able to destroy, but we were not able to build; rather, we must attack the most sensitive points, the nerve centres of international terrorism, without occupying territory. We must attack the brain, not the body.

I had hoped that there would be a Security Council resolution on combating terrorism, but again that did not happen. I read the first draft of such a resolution proposed by the Russian Federation, but that proposed draft resolution has not yet been adopted. Unfortunately, many of the Articles of the Charter of the United Nations, beginning with Article 39 and ending with Article 51, go unused. For example, Article 47, on the Military Staff Committee, is, in United Nations terminology, a "sleeping Article" or a "sleeping structure". Let us therefore awaken it. Since we have those Articles and we have this Charter, we need to use them when the appropriate opportunity arises. For without those measures, without coordinated military action based on the common will of the permanent members of the Security Council, the spread of terrorism will continue, and we shall be faced with new assassinations, new failed countries and new terrorist actions throughout the world.

Let me conclude with the old Roman oratorical phrase uttered frequently by Cato the Elder: "*Ceterum autem censeo Carthaginem esse delendam*" — "Moreover, I believe that Carthage must be destroyed". Deep in my heart I believe that someday we will overcome — not Carthage, but international terrorism.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Czech Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): I am once again participating in the regular session of the General Assembly to reaffirm our respect, admiration and congratulations to our brother, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his contribution to the life of the peoples of the world and of Mother Earth. We appreciate and express our deep respect for his work as Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am also here to reiterate that we are living in a time of renewed global obscurantism, spurred by the capitalist and imperialist barbarism that is killing human dignity, the integrity of our common home, Mother Earth, and the sovereignty of our countries.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today, according to United Nations data, some 94 per cent of the world's wealth is in the hands of a mere 20 per cent of the global population. More than 800 million people in the world are suffering from hunger. This grim social reality is the true face of capitalism. Humankind's main goals during this century should be to eradicate capitalism and imperialism as the prevailing societal model. If we do not build another model of society as soon as possible, the Sustainable Development Goals will be replaced with the sustainable goals of death for all living things and Mother Earth.

This year has been the hottest in the history of the planet, and each year is hotter than the previous one. This year, Bolivia is also experiencing one of the worst droughts in history. We have to be alert and take immediate action to prevent the barbarism of capitalism from transforming the Paris Agreement into an agreement of lies and blackmail.

The capitalist countries have built borders and walls everywhere — on water, on land and in the air. One out of every 100 people in the world is either a refugee or someone displaced by global warming, wars or imperialist invasions, as occurred in Syria, Iraq, Libya and other countries. We hope that all of the world's peoples can start building universal citizenship and one great country where people live in harmony and as part of a common family.

The expansionist and warmongering policies of the State of Israel and its allies are major expressions of barbarism in the modern world. We strongly condemn Israel's attacks on the civilian population of Palestine and demand that Israel cease hostilities immediately. We urge the United Nations to fully and immediately recognize the State of Palestine and take tangible action to stop the brutal genocide of the Palestinian people.

We return to the General Assembly to express our strong rejection of the coercive and unilateral economic measures imposed by the United States against Cuba for political reasons. It is not sufficient to restore diplomatic relations. The United States must compensate Cuba for the economic blockade and restore Guantanamo to Cuban territorial sovereignty.

We commend the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. It shows that we are fulfilling the promise of membership in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States — to make our region a zone of peace. We must never forget that peace can be achieved only with social justice. We highlight and admire Cuba's leadership in facilitating the peace agreement.

We lament the fact that other Governments, such as that of the United States, perpetrate attacks, such as the most recent bombing of military positions in Syria, which left dozens of soldiers dead or wounded. It shows the hypocrisy and the ongoing non-compliance with the commitments they undertook in the Syrian ceasefire agreement, announced by Russia and the United States on 9 September in Geneva.

We condemn terrorism, violence and war, but in order to eliminate terrorism, we must attack the root causes of this scourge for humankind. It must be said that as long as wealth remains in the hands of a few, as long as poverty and exclusion exist, as long as racism and discrimination persist, as long as the identity and the sovereignty of peoples are not respected and their

natural resources are pillaged for imperialist purposes, there will be grounds for violence and terrorism. We must build a world of peace and equality with dignity and brotherhood among peoples.

Many brother countries have been affected by the global economic crisis. In Bolivia, however, we have developed policies and are taking measures to deal with the repercussions of the global crisis in the capitalist system. Bolivia is leading economic growth in South America, as it is one of the countries that has achieved complementarity among economic growth, distribution of wealth, public investment and a significant reduction in poverty while expanding equality. None of this would have been possible without the sovereign measures it has taken, such as the nationalization of our natural resources and strategic companies.

Imperialist interests are creating a process of political destabilization in our region. We condemn foreign political intervention in our brother country of Venezuela. We salute the revolutionary fight of the people, undertaken with their leader, Commander Maduro. The new imperial conspiracy in the twenty-first century is no longer through coups d'etat but rather through parliamentary or judicial takeovers. They may be legal and constitutional, but they are not legitimate, nor do they respect the decisions of the people.

We express our deep concern about and rejection of the actions taken by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), which are in breach of the basic principles of the United Nations. The Organization of American States needs to be a true representation of the all the countries of the Americas, and not an agent or mouthpiece for the interests of the United States. We do not need an imperial leader to control our people. If the OAS does not represent or respect, the sovereignty of its member States, it would be better if it did not exist at all.

Last week, on 18 September, the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement met on Margarita Island, Venezuela, and strongly condemned action taken by the United States of America relative to its Transnational Drug Trafficking Act of 2015, which involves implementing extraterritorial measures that violate the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I take this opportunity to inform members of the Assembly that Bolivia, without military bases or the presence of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), is now faring better in the fight against drug trafficking, and this fact has been recognized by the United Nations.

I also note that thanks to a few police officers of our armed forces, we learned the following: when the DEA was in Bolivia, when it seized drugs, 50 per cent were burned and 50 per cent went to DEA for trade. A Bolivian officer inquired about the latter 50 per cent, and the response was that the DEA used the money to pay off our police. Investigations that were conducted proved that the DEA was training police and military personnel to plan the assassination of leaders. For these reasons and many more, I would like to tell those present in this Hall today that terrorism and drug trafficking are twins that serve the imperial interests of the United States, which seeks to invade and control other countries around the world — I am completely convinced of this.

Furthermore, I recall that in 1879, the Bolivian coast was invaded by Chilean and English transnational military forces with a view to taking the substantial natural resources there by force. For more than a century, Chile has expressly and repeatedly rejected the pressing need for Bolivia to once again be a coastal country, and it has undertaken to negotiate with Bolivia the restitution of maritime access.

Bolivia has relied in good faith on all the legal commitments undertaken, which served as the basis of our claim brought before the International Court of Justice. The Court declared its jurisdiction over the matter on 24 September 2015, after the Government of Chile presented an objection regarding said jurisdiction. We understand that these are times of dialogue, that we must work together on solutions that will allow us to resolve pending matters peacefully and with the full involvement of the people. We invite Chile to put an end to one of the longest-lasting conflicts in the history of Latin America, whose solution continues to be an outstanding debt between our nations. The solution to the conflict will benefit not only Bolivia but Chile and the integration of Latin America as a whole. We are certain that we will find a solution whereby everyone is a winner.

I would like to thank the organizations of the international community and the various presidents, former presidents and peoples of the world for their ongoing support for Bolivia to regain sovereign access to the sea. I would also like to highlight the fact that

the United Nations created an institution of such importance, the International Court of Justice, so that international conflicts and controversies could be resolved peacefully. We trust that the Court will serve justice.

Our greatest wish is to see the message of Pope Francis become reality — to establish channels of dialogue and tear down the walls that divide us. We want to launch a dialogue that satisfies the mutual interests of our countries. In Bolivia, we are building a country that will be an exemplar of equality, liberty with dignity, and sovereignty for the world. For these reasons, we insist and will continue to insist that all basic services must be recognized as human rights, and that, further, we recognize and respect the rights of Mother Earth. The new world order with social justice must be built on the foundation of fraternity among nations and harmony with Mother Earth for the well-being of all of us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nyusi (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour for me to address, on behalf of the people of Mozambique, the General Assembly, the world's highest forum for political and diplomatic discussion, at its seventy-first session.

I would first like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the Assembly at this session and to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for the dedication with which he has fulfilled his mandate in the context of achieving fundamental commitments, namely, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As we celebrate the first anniversary of the adoption of these important instruments, we are pleased to see that the world and the United Nations system have been making progress with their implementation. Despite those developments, however, we are cognizant of the challenges that remain.

The theme for this session of the Assembly — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world" — could not be more appropriate, as the year 2016 has ushered in a new era for implementing the global development agenda. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects the collective ambition for and global consensus on the importance of accelerating the creation of the conditions for ensuring that our efforts to eradicate poverty and build sustainable development are people-centred. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) therefore represent a tool with enormous potential for triggering profound changes in our vision for development and ensuring that no country or individual is left behind.

The major challenge to the Sustainable Development Goals lies in their implementation, particularly with regard to their alignment with global, regional and national instruments and resources, their financing, monitoring and evaluation of progress, and their inclusiveness. By integrating the dimension of peace and stability, the Sustainable Development Goals acknowledge the inseparability of peace and development and the need for each to be strengthened. Only in this way can we build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, for which genuine political will is required. For this process to succeed, we urgently need to reposition the United Nations system so that it can respond to current realities.

There can be no doubt that the global transformation that the SDGs are aiming to achieve will require structural changes in the way we design and implement our major national development agendas in the short, medium and long term. In that regard, Mozambique's 2015-2019 five-year Government programme, our

blueprint for governance, already reflects some of the principles and the three dimensions of sustainable development.

In order to mainstream, monitor and report on our implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, we recently established a national reference group comprising representatives from the Government, Parliament, civil society, the private sector and cooperating partners. The group's task is to follow up on progress on the indicators selected to assess targets up to 2030, as well as to deal with policy measures, funding possibilities and any factor that may have an effect on the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through the group's broad-based intervention, our goal is to make the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals more inclusive, consistent and transparent, and something which all the various stakeholders can feel part of.

The third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa in July 2015, recommended that countries use their own frameworks and means to respond to the new development agenda. The Conference advised Member States to develop comprehensive and integrated funding strategies that go beyond traditional procedures for public budgeting. In that context, and as part of our commitment to continuing to mobilize more resources, Mozambique has established a national fund for sustainable development. In addition, we have begun evaluating the flow of development financing, with the aim, on the one hand, of facilitating a system for viewing the development results for each of the country's available financial flows, and, on the other hand, of exploring options for the coherent integration of Government priorities with those of the international agenda.

To complement the foregoing efforts, we continue to urge the revitalization of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and support for the relevance of the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility. We also advocate for the importance of ensuring that partners honour their commitments undertaken within the framework of the internationally agreed development goals and of the predictability of development aid, based on the provisions of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. With the help of those tools we will be able to establish sound institutional foundations for the efficient and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, helping to fulfil the "universal push to transform our world".

Making our global agenda a reality requires a collective commitment on the part of all of us to strengthening multilateral institutions. To that end, we continue to believe firmly in the importance of reforming the United Nations as a whole and the Security Council in particular, as well as changing the architecture of international financial institutions on the basis of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and improving cooperation between the United Nations and regional economic organizations, particularly where the prevention and resolution of conflicts are concerned.

As we meet today in this Hall, we reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, a universal Organization with a mandate to maintain international peace and security and to defend human rights. We recognize the United Nations as an essential platform for political and diplomatic discussion and international cooperation on peace and development. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation for the excellent and successful job that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has done in completing his mandate to lead the Organization for two terms. We hope that under its soon-to-be-elected incoming Secretary-General, the United Nations will strengthen its relations with Mozambique, particularly in terms of helping us to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. We also look forward to seeing the implementation of reforms that will make our Organization more democratic, more representative and better able to serve all nations and peoples of the world.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our commitment to continuing our exemplary cooperation with the United Nations and all its Member States in order to achieve our noble objectives, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals, and to build a prosperous, peaceful world for the benefit of all its peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A 71/PV.13

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 21 September 2016, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Francis (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: I address the General Assembly today for my tenth and last time. The first time I spoke here (see A/62/PV.5), I addressed climate change, conflict, refugees and — what was apparently a first at the General Assembly — cyberattacks as the continuation of policy by other means.

The issues are therefore largely the same, and only the urgency that we sense has been ratcheted up. Certainly, the world was more stable then. It was before the economic and migration crises, the current conflicts in the wider Middle East, or Russia's aggression against Georgia and Ukraine. It was also before the war on truth and facts that seems to have taken over in many places. Despite our concerns at the time, we lived in a more stable world, where optimism had not yet become naiveté. Today, in too many parts of the world, we find a conflict either emerging, raging or frozen. Terrorism, always a scourge, dominates our daily headlines in all parts of the world.

Not all of today's conflicts and crises could have been prevented, yet the effect of many could have been mitigated had we acted sooner or had the proper mechanisms to resolve them been in place. When I addressed the Assembly in the wake of Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 (see A/63/PV.8), I warned not to apply international law selectively. International law had clearly been violated, yet little was done. Six years later, in 2014, we saw a repeat performance in Ukraine. Part of a sovereign State was annexed and another part turned into a war zone. For the first time since the Second World War, borders in Europe had been changed through the use of force. The prohibition on the use of force to change borders lies at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations. It was blatantly violated, and yet the United Nations could not make a difference. Russia's aggression in Ukraine continues. The territories of Ukraine and Georgia remain occupied by a foreign military force, and frozen conflicts persist in Nagorno Karabakh and Transnistria.

We need global norms. Just as we need international law, we also need the mechanisms to enforce it. Unless the United Nations starts to do more, it will, over time, lose relevance. When we face a global challenge, the United Nations should be the first place to come to for

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a solution, not the last stop when all other options have been exhausted, knowing that nothing will happen anyway.

During the past 15 years, the number of migrants and refugees worldwide has grown faster than the world's population. I raise the issue not only because it is a crisis, but also because I myself am a child of refugees. What we face is not — I stress — an unprecedented crisis, as so many have averred. We have faced far worse refugee crises and we have prevailed. In the Europe of 1946, Germany alone had 12 million internal refugees and another 12 million displaced persons of 20 different nationalities. Other countries in the post-war shambles and ruin of Europe at the time were not in much better shape. Yet we prevailed, or rather our grandparents did. In three years, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration — and I stress the first two words of the name of this agency — spent in today's money approximately €50 billion to resolve that crisis. It took political will, courage and far more money to solve that crisis than we are willing to spend today.

Migration is our common challenge. A sustainable solution to this complex problem lies in addressing its causes. Yet we also must fulfil our commitments under international conventions on the protection of refugees. Such commitments already exist. They are not some vague future goal to which we pledge.

Migrant children are at the heart of migration influx. Children on the move or otherwise affected by migration are the most vulnerable group, who, lacking agency, face limited access to justice and social and health services and therefore often suffer horrible abuse. One significant challenge is to provide education to the children in refugee camps. Depriving them of education will damage the prospects of refugee and asylum-seeking children, leave them behind and, at the same time, increase the risk of the kind of alienation that often leads later to extremism. We have seen this where refugee camps have been in place for a long time — sometimes for generations — begetting a continuing crop of disaffected, alienated and radicalized youth who feel that they have nothing to lose.

The ongoing conflicts we see around the world will, if we do not take control, breed a terrorism that knows no bounds. Estonia reaffirms its commitment to working together to prevent and counter terrorism, which is why we participate in the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Estonia firmly supports the International Criminal Court and its quest to end impunity. Countries, whether or not they have joined the Rome Statute, must set an example of non-aggression, self-restraint and respect for the rule of law. We believe that a commitment to fighting impunity at all levels is the only way to deter those who might commit crimes in future.

In 2005, the States Members of the United Nations committed to the principle of responsibility to protect, better known as R2P, and to fight genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. However, the brutality we see in Syria shows that an effective solution lies beyond the grasp of the United Nations. When a Government fails to live up to its commitments, when it violates the fundamental norms of civilized behaviour — let alone the tenets of the United Nations — the international community must act. In this respect, the Security Council bears primary responsibility. Council members that veto or vote against actions aimed at preventing mass atrocities carry co-responsibility for those atrocities.

A primary criticism directed at the United Nations today is the Security Council's inability or unwillingness to respond to major crises. Estonia cannot speak from first-hand experience, as we have not yet served in the Council; we have merely observed. We want, however, to bring the spirit of openness, transparency and inclusiveness to the Council's work, and hence are running for a non-permanent seat for 2020-2021. We are convinced that the role of the General Assembly and the non-permanent members of the Council must be increased.

The majority of States Members of the United Nations are small countries. As we look at the history of conflict since the Second World War, small countries are almost invariably the victims of conflict, not the abetters. This is nothing new. In the Melian Dialogue at the heart of his *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, Thucydides famously concluded that "the strong do what they will, the weak suffer what they must". That is why we have international law — to protect the weak and the small. Their voices must be better heard and their rights must be upheld. Estonia, as a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group, is working together with a number of other countries to

improve the working methods of the Security Council so as to bring about badly needed changes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are effective tools for advancing security and stability, spurring economic growth, eradicating poverty, preserving the environment and promoting human development. Taking that commitment seriously, Estonia was among the first countries to present our voluntary national review on the implementation of SDGs during the High-level Political Forum.

Estonia attaches great importance to the Goal of achieving gender equality that can unlock the economic potential of women. More equal societies work better for everyone. Achieving gender equality is first and foremost the duty of political leaders and the Governments that they lead. Amid current conflicts, it is important to ensure that women do not fall victim to gender-based violence. It is also important that they be included in conflict resolution and peace negotiations. It is therefore imperative to continue to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on women and peace and security.

Free media is an integral, even inseparable, part of modern and democratic society, where Governments listen to criticism, which, after all, forms part of what we call the voice of the people. Yet all around the globe, we see that critical voices — and even those that merely report the facts — face reprisals, jail and violence. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity must be implemented if we are to change the absurdity that reporting facts is a life-threatening activity.

For Estonia, a leader of innovation in the digital world, the right to freedom of opinion and expression online and offline is a fundamental issue. Digital technology has been a liberating force, yet some would turn it into a means to control citizens. As a founder of the Freedom Online Coalition, Estonia is a donor to the Digital Defenders Partnership, contributing to the protection of the rights of journalists, bloggers and human-rights defenders online. In times of rapid developments in information and communications technology, the protection of human rights and the rule of law must keep pace.

The right to freedom of expression also means keeping the Internet free and unrestricted. In other words, digital freedom of expression in no way differs from freedom of expression in the analog world. Censorship, illicit filtering and the online blocking of opposition voices thwarts democracy no less than when the printed word is censored.

An open Internet is an amplifier of economic growth and thus a crucial element of sustainable development in the twenty-first century. That is an essential conclusion, incidentally, of the World Bank's *World Development Report 2016*, entitled "Digital Dividends", whose preparation I co-chaired. Information technology can lead to transparent governance and economic growth but only if it is open and unfettered.

The challenges we face in the coming years are enormous. Estonia firmly believes in a rules-based international order. The only international organization global enough to achieve that end is the United Nations.

Finally, let me say that the 10 times I have appeared here over the past decade have been genuinely rewarding experiences, and I trust that my successor will continue to believe in the work that the Assembly does. I would like to thank the members for their attention and for all that they have given me.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Waqa: It is an honour to be in this Hall for the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Republic of Nauru, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his

assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. It is wonderful to see one of my Pacific Island brothers at the helm of this body. Let me assure him of the full support of my delegation as he leads the important work of the Assembly. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, our outgoing President, for his exceptional work.

I would like to say to the incoming President that his position comes with enormous responsibility, and the upcoming session will be more important than most. Every time we turn on the television, we are treated to images of turmoil. From violent extremism to political upheaval, to large-scale migration and a climate in chaos, the world is at a crossroads and the General Assembly will decide its path.

Fortunately, the 193 Members of the United Nations have given us some detailed road maps to guide our work: the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Those universal agreements capture the collective will of the international community. Such agreements point the way towards greater cooperation, and Nauru is deeply committed to their full implementation.

The commitments that we have made to each other represent our best efforts to meet the challenges before us, and we made those commitments knowing that some of us need help to fulfil them. We agreed that no country should be left behind. Now begins the most important work: translating our words into concrete action. Our primary task is to direct resources to where they will matter most.

We should not underestimate the difficulty of such a task. Some international funding mechanisms exclude small countries like mine, or prove impossible to access because of the limited capacity of small countries. Private investment is unreliable and rarely available to support basic services and critical infrastructure. Meanwhile, the most promising financing models for small developing countries — direct access and direct budgetary support, for example — are rarely available as an option. That needs to change, so that small countries can fully benefit from the historic agreements we have reached.

Nauru is asking a lot from its development partners. We want to be better partners ourselves. Our efforts must, therefore, go beyond capacity-building to focus on institution-building. Those efforts must be backed by real resources and include the long-term, in-country engagement of international and regional agencies. The goal must be nothing short of building durable domestic institutions that are run by a skilled national workforce. On that note, let me thank our partners Australia, Taiwan, Japan, the Russian Federation, Cuba, New Zealand and others for their support to our sustainable development priorities.

The implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 — the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources — is a high priority. The ocean is a pillar of our small island economy, our environment and our culture. Stresses on marine biodiversity are mounting, including those that go beyond national jurisdiction. The gaps in our governance of the oceans must therefore be addressed. We urge a timely and comprehensive conclusion of the Preparatory Committee process on developing an international instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The upcoming United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 presents a welcome and much-needed opportunity to foster a shared vision for a healthy, productive and resilient ocean to guide all our ocean-related activities.

Let me also highlight the importance of the long-term conservation and sustainable use of our fisheries. The parties to the Nauru Agreement are on the cutting edge of sustainable fisheries management. However, the international community must ensure that a disproportionate burden of conservation measures does not fall on the small island developing States (SIDS). The burden and costs of those measures must be shared equitably.

The full implementation of our international commitments takes on much greater urgency in the face of climate change. That is why Nauru was among the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement. It is encouraging to hear that we are on track for the Agreement's entry into force this year. However, it is far too early to celebrate. The Paris Agreement is not the end of our climate work. It is only the beginning.

Greenhouse gas emissions over the past 150 year have pushed the climate system beyond the boundaries of human experience. Brewing superstorms and droughts can be as destructive as any bomb. Sea-level rise can occupy our territory just as surely as an invading army. From the perspective of my small island nation in the Pacific, climate change is our greatest humanitarian crisis. It is our war, and while Nauru will be among the first to experience the worst impacts, climate change will be the rest of the world's humanitarian challenge as well.

The Paris Agreement notwithstanding, the dangerous climate impacts will continue to grow worse over the coming decades. We have little understanding of how our human systems will hold up under climate stress. Global supply chains, finance and insurance markets, food and water distribution — those systems are complex and interlinked and form the foundation of our modern civilization. Climate change raises some hard questions, and I am not sure we have the answers. Can we feed a planet of 9 billion people when crop yields are projected to fall? Will we learn to share declining freshwater resources as the glaciers disappear? Will we be able to protect the millions who are rendered homeless when low-lying coastal areas are inundated? And can these and many other challenges be managed effectively so that we avoid a proliferation of failed States?

We are simply not prepared. For that reason, Nauru calls on Members to support the proposal by the Pacific SIDS to appoint a United Nations special representative on climate and security. The security implications of climate change will define the twenty-first century, and we must prepare.

Regarding the Security Council, Nauru supports expanding the number of permanent and non-permanent members in the Council. It is time to reflect the geopolitical realities of today, not those of 70 years ago. The persistence of the current arrangement continues to cast a shadow of illegitimacy over everything we do at the United Nations. If we are to nurture the spirit of cooperation represented by the historic agreements of 2015, then we must reform the most powerful organ of the United Nations. And we support the inclusion of India, Japan, Germany, Brazil and others in the permanent category.

Nauru welcomes the restored diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. However, we call upon the United States to completely lift its economic embargo immediately.

Nauru is deeply concerned about the situation in West Papua, including the alleged human rights abuses there. As emphasized in the Pacific Islands Forum communiqué, it is important that an open and constructive dialogue take place with Indonesia on that matter.

Nauru is also concerned by the mounting tensions provoked by the recent action of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Pacific region saw far too much violence and suffering during the previous century. We must not allow the scourge of war to return. Nuclear proliferation has no place in a sustainable world.

I would like to address the situation of Nauru's close friend, Taiwan. According to the Charter of the United Nations, our mission here is

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

The 23 million people of the Republic of China should therefore enjoy those same fundamental rights. Taiwan has contributed to the World Health Assembly and the International Civil Aviation Organization. The people are promoting the Sustainable Development Goals domestically and internationally, and they are helping to lead the way towards a low-carbon economy. Taiwan is a key stakeholder in the international community. We should make efforts to regularize their participation throughout the United Nations system, so that we can all benefit from their substantial contributions.

Lastly, I would like to extend my country's deep appreciation for the work of the current Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. He has been a true friend of small islands. We are thankful for his leadership on many of the issues that we hold most dear. His most enduring legacy may perhaps be to have raised climate change to the top of the international agenda, but his tireless efforts to ensure that no country, no matter how small, is left behind is just as important. He was the first sitting Secretary-General to make an official visit to Pacific small island developing States, and he has an open invitation to visit Nauru.

In conclusion, I want to say that the United Nations is at a crossroads. While the Charter of the United Nations is rooted in the equality of nations, we do not

always live up to that principle. There are still times when only some of us hold the pen, some sit at the table and some are locked out behind a closed door. A small group of countries has the real power to give us the necessary push to transform our world. They can make sure that resources are directed to where they matter. We need those countries to carry forward the goals and objectives that we have spent so many years negotiating, even in those exclusive rooms when the rest of us are not present.

The power of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stems from its legitimacy. It was the product of a truly open and transparent process that reflected the hopes and aspirations of all 193 States Members of the United Nations. We all sat at the table and held the pen together. I implore our partners to remember that. Now, we are entrusting the President of the General Assembly with taking that work forward and holding us accountable for our commitments. From one Pacific Islander to another, he has our complete confidence.

May God bless the Republic of Nauru. May God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hernández Alvarado (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me begin by congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election to guide this organ. I wish him every success for the well-being of humankind.

Our country is asking for major reforms and transformations. We understand that it is up to our generation to shoulder the responsibility of continuing to press for the changes that need to take place in order to bring about a better world. In 2009, we emerged from a deep political crisis that had serious economic and social consequences, especially for the most vulnerable of my people. The economy was in the red. We could not pay civil servants. Economic growth decreased, poverty increased. By neglecting security and safety, homicides grew unchecked. Institutions were allowed to become contaminated by drug trafficking and organized crime. We suffered. Above and beyond the crisis of public confidence in the country's institutions, there was also the fact that Honduras was perceived as a very unsafe country by the rest of the world. And so we ended up being isolated.

With much effort, we have been able to restore our democracy, and today all political points of view in Honduras are represented by political parties. Less than three years ago, upon a decision taken by the Honduran people, we began to tread the right path. It has not been easy. On 27 January 2014, we began restoring our country, with support from various sectors of society that believed in our future. They were betting on the right path — on the construction of a new Honduras. Thirty-two months later, what have we achieved since we began that task?

In the economic field, we have seen a reduction in the fiscal deficit to less than 5 per cent of the gross domestic product, with sustained economic growth, whereas the larger economies in our continent were stagnating. There has been improvement in foreign investment and in productive infrastructure. We have seen an increase in tax revenues. We have also seen an improvement in our credit and risk rating. We also have a national economic development programme called Honduras 2020. It seeks to double private investment and the number of jobs created over the next 5 years in strategic sectors of our national economy.

In the area of public safety, we have achieved the dismantling of the main drug cartels, which were responsible for the most tragic violence in the history of our country. We have begun to break up the activities of criminal bandits, and we have captured 274 ringleaders

of gangs and bandit groups. We began a very positive, aggressive process of cleaning up the police. We worked on strengthening the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the intelligence capacity of the State. We have started to fight corruption and impunity, which had been one of our primary concerns, and have had notable successes.

In April 2015, in order to deepen that campaign, we implemented, with the support of the Organization of American States, a mission to aid us in our fight against corruption and impunity in Honduras. This has led to a frontal attack on criminals that has resulted in a decline in violence, reflected in a 26 per cent reduction in the homicide rate. Most importantly, we have saved lives — lives of thousands of our fellow citizens. In the fight against organized crime, we have enjoyed close international cooperation, based on trust. We have brought before the courts corrupt public servants, business owners and people active in the security and justice fields who have committed crimes and violations of human rights. We have extradited, for judgment outside the country, 12 Hondurans and 5 foreigners accused of drug trafficking or organized crime. Today, we are no longer the first, second, third, fourth or fifth most violent country in the world, according to the *Global Peace Index 2016*.

In the social area, we have reached out with financial assistance to 275,000 families living in extreme poverty in order to improve the indicators for the health and education of their minor children. Some 1.2 million persons receive benefits to improve their living conditions with cement floors, decent roofs, toilets, eco-friendly stoves and water filters. We have reduced illiteracy by expanding preschool and have increased the coverage of intermediate and secondary education. Approximately 1.2 million children receive school lunches, and 1.3 million people have access to decentralized health-care services. We have tripled the purchasing of medications, attaining an average of 80 per cent of the requirements in our public hospitals. We have launched a campaign against non-communicable chronic diseases, with a focus on those occurring in early infancy, as well as programmes for the prevention of adolescent pregnancies.

But we recognize that much more remains to be done. We must not lose sight of the future. We cannot lose our way nor abandon the good path that we have set out on. Our country, Honduras, is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Three other issues deserve special attention in this debate at the United Nations: climate change, migratory flows and the rights of victims.

With reference to climate change, Honduras has suffered three consecutive years of a drought that has affected food production and endangered food security for nearly 250,000 families. Drought and high temperatures have also led to the proliferation of a very destructive insect, the southern pine-bark beetle, which strips the bark off pine trees and has devastated one sixth of our forests.

To deal with those challenges, we have responded with a food-assistance programme directed towards the families at risk, and for three years we have experienced no famine. In those efforts, we have received the assistance of the United Nations and friendly Governments, which have contributed financial resources to complement our national resources. We have also taken action against the pine-bark beetle. We are investing our own resources and enjoy the technical assistance of friendly countries. In addition, we have begun a programme to construct water reservoirs and irrigation systems for small farms in dry areas, complemented by technical assistance and inputs for our farmers. We are developing a comprehensive policy on the land, forests and water so that we can successfully confront the enormous challenges that countries like ours face in climate change.

This morning, we submitted to the Secretary-General our ratification instrument for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We Hondurans have complied. I wish to recall a statement I made at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris, to the effect that the accounts were not clear, and I must reiterate once more that the accounts remain unclear. That is why I would invite the countries that have not as yet submitted their ratification to do so. I advise the United Nations and other international organizations to take prompt action to make the Agreement effective so that we will see pragmatic results from the green funds. I firmly believe that solutions need to come at the same pace as the problems. The accounts will not be clear until we achieve concrete results.

On the issue of migration, the growing economy, the creation of economic opportunity, security and the response to climate change are all creating better living

conditions for our people in Honduras, and with all that we are attacking some of the major causes of irregular migration. The problems that confront our countries are becoming less national and more transnational in character. Political borders have become less significant, and the success of one country increasingly depends on that of other countries.

Organized crime is a transnational monster. It knows no nationality and no scruples. It wears many faces — the movement of capital, the movement of criminals and trafficking in persons, weapons and drugs, among others. The challenges that currently confront countries like Honduras are produced by decisions and actions taken both in the public sector and in the private sector. They are of transnational origin and have transnational consequences. Clearly, they must be resolved in a transnational way.

The refugee crisis and migratory flows are not problems just for a single country. Drug trafficking is not a cause or effect produced by a single State. The same holds true for climate change, which is a problem for all of humankind. Owing to our geographic position, Honduras has recently seen an alarming flow of migrants from our continent, as well as from other continents. In just a single year, the volume of migratory flows through our territory has increased 300 per cent. In that light, today I must affirm that migration is a global issue of global interest requiring a global solution.

Our Governments are finding transnational solutions to our regional problems, for example by driving forward the development initiatives that Honduras, together with El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, has launched with regard to the Gulf of Fonseca, on the Pacific coast. We have also formalized the first customs union on the continent with the Government of Guatemala. That new economic space represents half of the Central American population and approximately half of the gross domestic product of our region. If we incorporate the other countries of Central America into the customs integration initiative, we shall together become the seventh largest Latin American economy. Furthermore, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, together with the United States, have created an alliance for prosperity. We have invited the United Nations, as well as other countries from Latin America, Europe and Asia, to join in that initiative. Together, we have also developed international instruments to protect and promote human rights.

However, in the face of aggression by common criminals and terrorists, we have failed to protect the image of the victims of those attacks. Quite the contrary, the use of force and the resort to terror and violence have been exalted and promoted. That has contaminated respect for the dignity of human persons, thanks to the way in which their images and stories have been presented by the media. The criminals themselves use the media to highlight their violent acts, promoting and continuing to perpetrate them. As in other countries that have experienced criminal violence, in addition to the pain of the loss of human lives and of losing our peace, we have experienced a sense of injustice when the rights of victims and the rights of their relatives and friends are not respected.

I ask myself, the Assembly and all of humankind: Do the victims of violence have no rights? Is the cruelty with which these human beings have been treated not apparent? Where is the sympathy for their family and friends? Do they not deserve to be respected? With whom lies the responsibility to inform them of such bloody events? What about the responsibilities of those who do not condemn the violence? Why is the inheritance of the material goods of the deceased respected, but the protection of their image and dignity is not?

Recently in our country, Hondurans witnessed a child taking the hand of his father's corpse. His father had lost his life on a public road as the consequence of a criminal act. That image was broadcast throughout all media and social networks. It made me reflect and wonder about the extent of the rights of that child. How far do the rights of the family of that child extend? I invite everyone to reflect on that issue, which affects not only the victims but also those closest to them. Such problems have had a significant impact on entire communities and entire generations that have become desensitized to such abominable events and grow up considering fear, intimidation and aggression to be part of everyday life. I believe that victims, too, have rights. Let us reflect upon that.

Today Honduras calls on Member States to work together to face the challenges and to be part of the solutions. Today, the time has come to act with determination and commitment. I invite the Assembly to solve problems together by assuming the responsibilities that are incumbent on each of us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly I thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Her Excellency Ms. Isatou Njie Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia.

Ms. Njie Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Isatou Njie Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Njie Saidy (Gambia): First and foremost, I bring greetings from His Excellency Sheikh Alhaji Yahya Abdul-Aziz Jemus Junkung Jammeh Babili Mansa, President of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia. I have the singular honour of reading out his statement, which is as follows:

"I bring fraternal greetings from the people of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia. I wish to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, an important and coveted position. His election is an eloquent testimony to his diplomatic acumen, and I can assure him of the support of the Gambian people, including the Gambian delegation here present, during his stewardship.

"In the same vein, I wish to express deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for the able and efficient manner in which he conducted the affairs of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. He will surely be remembered for the bold and major initiatives that were launched during his tenure as President. I also wish to extend sincere thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts in pursuit of world peace and economic progress over the past decade.

"The world is at a crossroads. Since the previous General Assembly session, global peace and security have steadily deteriorated. Wars in the Middle East have intensified with alarming ferocity and unprecedented human casualties. In Africa, fratricidal wars in the Horn of Africa and in Libya pose the greatest threat to peace and stability on the continent. It is also a source of great concern that, despite the dangerous situations in Syria, Iraq and Libya, geopolitical interests continue to override humanitarian considerations. Unless concrete action is taken now, places like Aleppo, Mosul and Tripoli will soon cease to be human habitats.

"In Africa, the protracted war in Somalia and the armed conflict between political rivals in South Sudan continue to blight the political landscape with untold human suffering. To complicate an already difficult situation, the impasse in Darfur and the frequent outbreaks of fighting in the Central African Republic and Burundi pose a serious threat to the civilian population, particularly women and children. I appeal to my brothers and sisters in those African countries to eschew violence and embrace reconciliation. As leaders of our people, we must always remember that history will judge us kindly only if we are magnanimous and devoted to the welfare and well-being of our people.

"We cannot, of course, discuss international peace and security without addressing the lingering and unresolved Palestinian problem. The time has come, and is indeed overdue, for Israel to heed the overwhelming international consensus for a two-State solution as the only viable option that can ensure peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine.

"The fragile peace that we enjoy is being seriously undermined by terrorism, which has assumed a global dimension, with the killing and maiming of innocent people. Today, we remember with sadness all the victims of terrorism who have been gunned down or maimed by bombs in Paris, Brussels, Bamako, Ouagadougou and Pakistan, inter alia, around the globe. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that the world is in grave

danger and that our human existence is under serious threat as a result. Collective action is the best way to fight that global scourge.

"We are also greatly concerned that certain rogue politicians and pseudo-intellectuals with nefarious intentions are using the terrorism card to revive and propagate the notion of a clash of civilizations in which Islam is at war with the West. Their incendiary rhetoric lambasting Islam is unacceptable and can serve only to further polarize the world. The evil actions of a group of individuals claiming adherence to Islam cannot be taken to represent the convictions of the majority. There is no clash between Islam and the other Abrahamic religions of Christianity and Judaism, and there is certainly no war between Islam and the world. We condemn the renegade forces of terrorism and reject their campaign to create a nexus between terrorism and Islam.

"While we express anxiety over global insecurity, we must also focus on global economic conditions. A world that is marked by disparities and divided into zones of the affluent and the poor cannot enjoy durable peace and security. A world in which the conspicuous consumption of the few overshadows the abject poverty of the majority can only be a world of the powerful against the weak and of mutual animosity, mistrust and tensions. It is for those reasons and owing to our quest for a just and equitable world that we support the theme of the current session of the General Assembly: 'The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world'.

"Under the Millennium Development Goals, the Islamic Republic of the Gambia registered significant progress in its development agenda. I am happy and proud to state that hunger has been eradicated in our country, and the level of undernourishment has decreased from 13 per cent to 3 per cent. Our ultimate aim is to make agriculture attractive and profitable through our back-to-the-land policy, so that our people can work and live in dignity.

"The future of Africa and indeed the world is inextricably linked to women as well as youth. Unfortunately, Africa is losing its young population because of migration. Our villages, towns and cities are being deserted as young people attempt to sail to what is wrongly perceived as the new El Dorado. Thousands have perished at sea, while thousands more are languishing in detention centres in Europe. That is an unprecedented depletion of our human resources and is bound to have disastrous consequences if allowed to continue. Given that disturbing phenomenon, international cooperation that would create jobs for youth should no longer be a slogan but a calculated strategy to keep them at home in gainful employment that could enhance their well-being and ensure the development of their countries.

"The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which the Islamic Republic of the Gambia signed together with the entire membership of the United Nations, is a landmark in our human evolution. It shows that, despite the imperfections of our Organization and our ideological differences, we are without a doubt capable of forging a global partnership to deal with a common danger. The negotiations were protracted and at times acrimonious, but in the end our common desire to save our planet prevailed. I wish to pay tribute to all the men and women who worked with dedication and sacrifice to ensure the success of the negotiations.

"Although the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was a success, the magnitude and complexities of other challenges facing the world have again brought into sharp focus the role of the United Nations and its capacity to address and advance international peace, security and development. That brings to mind the repeated calls of Member States for Security Council and broader United Nations reforms in order to enable the Organization to confront new and emerging challenges. The current composition of the Security Council, with five permanent members holding the veto power, is undemocratic, and the system is akin to minority rule. A situation in which five countries dictate the political and economic agenda and landscape of the world and can override international consensus by veto is indeed an anachronism.

"Africa has the highest representation in the General Assembly, yet that continent, with over 1.2 billion people, has been denied the right to a permanent seat on the Security Council. The Islamic Republic of the Gambia therefore once

again calls for the expansion of the Security Council to facilitate the allocation to Africa of two permanent seats with veto power and two other non-permanent seats.

"Africa's legitimate demands have been well documented and articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. A well-structured and fully inclusive United Nations is what the world needs, and Africa is ready to take its rightful place and play a more pivotal and effective role in world affairs.

"The significance of the reforms being envisaged calls for boldness and strong leadership. That is why we attach great importance to the election of the next Secretary-General. It is our hope that he or she will combine the legacies of his or her predecessors with the qualities of vision, fair play and equity. We always expect the new Secretary-General to be the people's Secretary-General and not the servant of the powerful five alone. The Secretary-General must be the voice of the voiceless and the chief advocate of the people of the world. We therefore look to the new Secretary-General to provide a visionary leadership that will settle old problems and disputes in a new era of peace, progress and prosperity.

"The failure to address and settle age-old injustices is responsible for some of our major problems in the world today. I am referring to the historical injustices of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism. For far too long, slave-trading nations and colonialists have stubbornly defied good conscience, which would compel them to acknowledge the evil nature of their actions and atone for the atrocities that were committed against Africans and people of African descent. The African continent was plundered and pillaged, while millions of its inhabitants were trafficked to North America and the Caribbean. For centuries, they were exploited as slave labour in plantations, fuelling the industries of the slave-owning countries. Those acts of enslavement and forced labour provide empirical evidence that the economic foundation of the Western economies was built by enslaved Africans.

"There is also irrefutable evidence that, despite their providing free labour, African slaves suffered discrimination, exploitation, torture and death at the hands of their ruthless owners. The effects of the inhumane treatment that they suffered can be traced in their offspring. Even today, the slavery syndrome continues to impact and shape the lives and circumstances of Africans and people of African descent. To us who are affected by that phenomenon, slavery is a painful legacy. Yet there are those who question the merits of reparations.

"Although there have been pleas of innocence, there have also been notable pleas of guilt, as well. In 2006, for example, Tony Blair, the then British Prime Minister, apologized for his country's role in the transatlantic slave trade. The Assembly will recall that in 2007, Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London at the time, acknowledged that the wealth generated from the slave trade was responsible for the economic prosperity of England. But perhaps the best illustration of guilt was the proposal in the 1860s by General William Sherman of the United States Army that every freed slave in the United States should be given 40 acres and a mule as compensation. Sadly, President Andrew Johnson and the United States Congress rejected the idea at the time.

"That was the beginning of the resistance against reparations. Yet, over time, we have had several global reparations. America, Britain, Germany and Japan have seen the need for and prudence of paying reparations for crimes committed against other countries and peoples. Germany, for example, we all recall, paid $60 billion to survivors of the Holocaust, and the Jewish Reparation Fund exists as well. The United States paid $20,000 each to 10,000 Japanese Americans who were sent to internment camps. Similarly, the United States has compensated native tribes for broken treaties. Japan has paid Second World War reparations to its former colonial possessions, such as Korea. It should also be noted that Britain has paid reparations to the Maoris of New Zealand for damage done during colonial times. More recently, Iraq has paid compensation to Kuwait for damages that it caused during its invasion and occupation of that country in 1990.

"Why then should Africans and people of African descent be ineligible for reparations, after suffering the historic injustices of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism? Apart from historic precedents, there is merit, of course, in the call for

reparations for damages caused during colonialism. Many of the problems confronting the former colonies today are the direct consequences of the actions of the former colonial Powers. A vivid illustration of how colonizers destroyed Africa is the way in which the continent was divided and shared out. The balkanization of Africa did not respect the territorial integrity of countries; nor did it consider tribal boundaries, or trade groups for that matter.

"The division of Africa was arbitrary, taking into account the best interests of the colonizers. As a result, the geography of countries was altered. Children and kin became separated, customs and traditions destroyed and the most valuable artefacts carted away to Western museums. Africa was indeed torn apart, its people displaced and disintegrated, and the continent as a whole weakened forever. Reparations are therefore justified because they would demonstrate remorse and symbolize the healing of the wounds of colonialism. Reparations would also be an effective way to correct the global economic imbalances caused by colonialism.

"It is therefore with a deep sense of mission and moral imperative that I ask the General Assembly to accept the case of slavery and colonialism as a global issue that should be addressed without equivocation. The African Union has given the matter its full support, and all well-meaning people around the world expect a favourable response from the international community to such a legitimate cause in preparation for the discussions and debates that would ensue. We recently concluded consultations at an international colloquium on the subject in Banjul, our capital, where a road map was presented on the way forward. The Group of African States at the United Nations is already working on a draft resolution on slavery, the slave trade, colonialism and reparations, to be introduced before the Assembly at this session. I appeal to all to support the adoption of that draft resolution and restore the dignity of our African ancestors.

"In conclusion, I encourage the Assembly to use this opportunity to once again address the burning issues of our time. The people of the world are in need of durable peace. We need inclusive dialogue to resolve our problems and differences and forge partnerships that will improve our human conditions. The security of our world can be assured only if we establish genuine and friendly relations based on mutual respect for the dignity of our people and the sovereignty of our nations. I wish the Assembly a successful session."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Isatou Njie Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Dessalegn (Ethiopia): At the outset, let me congratulate the President on his assumption of his high office to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish to take this opportunity to assure him of our support in the effective discharge of his responsibilities. I would also like to express appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, who steered the work of the historic seventieth session.

Since the Secretary-General has addressed the Assembly at its general debate for the last time, allow me to express, on behalf of the people and Government of Ethiopia and on my own behalf, sincere appreciation to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his tireless service to our Organization over the past decade. We cherish his friendship with Ethiopia and with Africa as a whole, and we wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

The past year has indeed been historic in more ways than one. It has been a time when we have reflected on our journey over the past 70 years and taken decisive steps towards ensuring the peace and prosperity of

our peoples and the protection of our environment. We have seen what the United Nations can deliver as a unique intergovernmental platform for a common and collective response to the myriad challenges facing humankind as a whole. It has been testament to the fact that we can indeed achieve concrete results, if we set aside, or at least manage, our differences and act for the common good.

Now is, of course, the time for action, so that the transformative decisions that we took last year will have real meaning in the lives of our people. We recognize the small but encouraging steps taken towards the implementation of our decisions in many of the domains. For our part, for instance, not only have we integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into our national development plans, but we have also embarked on implementing them. The ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is also a major priority, and we will expedite the process as soon as our Parliament opens its session at the end of this month.

To say that the world is currently confronting unprecedented challenges would be an understatement. Without a doubt, there are enormous implications for the implementation of the ambitious and transformative agendas that we set out last year. International peace and stability are facing greater risks with the rise of geopolitical tensions and the growing threats posed by all shades of terrorist groups and other transnational criminal networks. The world economy has not yet come out of its crisis, and growing inequality is creating a lot of frustration, paving the way for the resurgence of populism.

While social media offer a digital platform to improve the exchange of information and enhance popular participation, their attendant negative impacts cannot simply be ignored. In fact, we are seeing how misinformation can easily go viral via social media and mislead many people, especially youth, who are our future. Social media have certainly empowered populists and other extremists to exploit people's genuine concerns and spread their message of hate and bigotry without any inhibition.

We would be the first to admit that countries need to assume ownership of their problems. Externalizing the sources of setbacks and seeking external causes for one's national shortcomings is an approach to problem-solving whose results can only be pregnant with danger. But it is vital to underline a critical matter that is usually given short shrift, both by the media and others. It is simply hypocritical to deny that some countries have been the targets of destabilization activities carried out without accountability by people and groups that have been given shelter by friendly States. The abuse of opportunities created by the social media and other media outlets financed by friendly Governments has become flagrant. It is just plain foolish to deny that such abuses have no implications for the respect of the human rights of our people or that such abuse does not undermine our capacity to ensure that we maintain a high standard in that respect.

The fragile nature of our environment has also been evident. The drought induced by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation has affected the livelihood of millions of people, including our own, all across the world. The current drought is happening at a time when humanitarian needs have become enormous because of other emergency situations. In addition, the large movements of refugees and migrants have led to a major crisis. Such movements are a matter that we have discussed at length over the past few days.

It is in such challenging circumstances that we are striving to implement a transformational agenda. Obviously, there are no easy solutions to the complex challenges at hand. The situation is much more pronounced for the least developed countries like us that are making every possible effort to make a dent on poverty. We are trying to escape from the poverty trap and take our country on a path of sustainable growth, but there are bound to be twists and turns in our efforts. The successful development experiences of others have shown that such twists and turns are only natural.

What we need is to have a policy space that allows us to make mistakes and learn from them. We believe that our vision is right, and we are determined to get to our goal. Whatever challenges and shortcomings we may have, we do not have an issue owning up to them, and we will make every possible effort to deal with our shortcomings with the close consultation, cooperation and participation of our people. There is no better testimony of the resolve that we have in that regard than the way in which we have handled the tragedies caused by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation.

Nevertheless, we know that we are not living in isolation, and we need a favourable external environment in order to realize our development aspirations. We cannot simply wish away the challenges that I have

outlined. They need the collective and coordinated responses of all of us, and for our part we are always ready and willing to continue to contribute positively in close partnership with others in our region and beyond in tackling such challenges.

In that context, peace and security in the Horn of Africa are extremely critical for us, and we are doing everything we can with others in the region to tackle the conflicts afflicting our neighbours. We have been making tremendous efforts to assist South Sudan to resolve its internal problems. What happened in July was indeed a serious setback for the implementation of the peace agreement that the South Sudanese parties had signed under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Plus. We in the IGAD region met on a number of occasions at various levels to address the issue and made concrete proposals on the way forward. The proposals were subsequently supported by the African Union and the United Nations. We are confident and hopeful that the South Sudanese parties will heed the call of the regional and international communities and restore peace for the sake of their people, who have suffered so much.

In addition, we have also been making efforts to fight terrorism in and pacify Somalia. In spite of the many challenges that persist, Somalia has indeed come a long way. The symbolic significance of the IGAD extraordinary summit held recently in Mogadishu cannot be overemphasized. Who would have thought that this would be possible only a few years ago? Somalia has defied the odds. We hope that smooth elections in the coming months will consolidate the gains made in recent years and lay the foundation for a peaceful and stable Somalia. The countries in the region are ready to support and accompany the process together with the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners.

Ethiopia is indeed honoured to have been elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2017-2018 term. Let me take this opportunity to express our profound appreciation to all the Members of the United Nations for their support and confidence.

I would like to conclude my remarks by reaffirming our commitment to effectively discharging our responsibilities and upholding the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Dacian Cioloş, Prime Minister of Romania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Romania.

Mr. Dacian Cioloş, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Dacian Cioloş, Prime Minister of Romania, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Cioloş (Romania) (*spoke in French*): More than ever, the world is confronting challenges that demand global solutions. Persistent, chronic conflicts, the scourge of terrorism, natural disasters, poverty, social exclusion and displaced populations are all challenges that we must approach in a sustainable and globally oriented manner.

Our world is increasingly compelled to find inclusive solutions. We cannot enjoy peace and security without development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide us with a new opportunity and a universal impetus to transform the world. The SDGs set an ambitious programme of action for the years to come, aimed at eradicating extreme poverty, fighting for peace and security, combating inequality and protecting the planet.

We need to integrate the various strategies relating to climate change, development, humanitarian aid, the eradication of hunger, economic growth and peacebuilding. The political direction that we have set out for our social, industrial and agricultural policies will have an impact in one way or another on sustainable development. The experiences of the past show us that using purely isolated, sectorial policies will create more problems than solutions.

In Romania, we have launched the process of transforming the SDGs into national policies. We are concentrating on taking on environmental and climate-change issues in sector-specific policies, while also developing a comprehensive approach. We want to

ensure the transition to a circular and green economy by specifically focusing on the good governance of natural resources and naturally protected areas, which cover 25 per cent of our territory.

The implementation of the SDGs and the transition to a green economy provide the only means of ensuring a sustainable, inclusive and decent life for our citizens. We believe that a cross-cutting approach to energy, environmental and agricultural policies, as well as climate issues, is essential in order to achieve the SDGs. For example, in the area of housing and energy efficiency, we recently adopted a programme to promote green technologies and materials. This year, we also adopted a national anti-poverty package that includes specific measures to fight social exclusion and help vulnerable children.

Development will become unsustainable if it is not inclusive in terms of both content and implementation. That is why we have invested significantly in open governance tools involving civil society and the business world.

(*spoke in English*)

Events in South-East Europe over the past two years have served to highlight complex security challenges in the vicinity of my country and are, without any doubt, responsible for the reversals in our progress towards sustainable development. The belt of frozen conflict zones around the Black Sea remains a serious, permanent threat to stability in the region and beyond. Prosperity and respect for the principles and norms of international law have been put on hold. We are deeply troubled by the use of hybrid warfare tactics and the illegal annexation of territories.

The growing instability in the Middle East, with Syria as the epicentre, is a major source of proliferating terrorism and massive migration. It is a threat not only to the region but to the entire world, and it must be addressed resolutely. We need to encourage reconciliation in the countries affected by instability by establishing policies aimed at promoting bridges between communities, while ensuring proper representation and inclusiveness. We must focus increased attention on post-conflict reconstruction strategies based on the Sustainable Development Goals and their Targets for Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen and continue discussions with all the stakeholders involved on the necessary institutional process and financial contributions.

Romania is convinced that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most important tasks facing us; it could signal a turning point on the road back to stabilization and respect for fundamental rights, mutual acceptance and prosperity.

My country remains committed to the United Nations effort to maintain international peace and security. Romania has long been a contributor to United Nations peacekeeping. At present, Romanian military and police forces are taking part in ten United Nations peacekeeping operations and two special political missions.

Peace and security cannot be sustained if the potential threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction persists, particularly nuclear weapons. Romania is currently chairing the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and has been clear in its condemnation of the nuclear and ballistic tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this year.

I would also like to underline the importance of rethinking the relationship between humanitarian and development policies as an opportunity to find new solutions and responses. It is our responsibility to build on existing regional experiences and initiatives, some of which have emerged in the follow-up process to the Istanbul Humanitarian Summit. We need to move beyond sectoral approaches in trade policy; address climate change, hunger and poverty; ensure food production and economic growth; and find a more inclusive institutional framework to put forward integrated solutions. Romania is stepping up its effort to respond to those challenges in the spirit of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing and in accordance with our legal and moral obligations. Let me make three brief points to highlight our main lines of action.

First, as an emerging donor and a country of resettlement, Romania has been working to expand its contribution to international humanitarian actions in recent years by increasing its resettlement capacity and financial assistance. Secondly, Romania continues to advocate for strengthening respect for international humanitarian law and constructive engagement in debates on possible ways to improve compliance. Thirdly, in its capacity as President of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime for the seventh session,

Romania encourages greater accountability with regard to the implementation of the Convention's provisions on human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants, among other areas.

Mr. El Hayeen (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Outrageous terrorist attacks have shocked the world this year, reminding us time and again that international terrorism undermines peace and security wherever it occurs. We cannot let terrorists take hold. Terrorist groups cannot be countered through military actions alone; we must also address the ability of such groups to attract recruits, particularly young people. We must eliminate the root causes that have allowed such groups to develop in the first place. Preventing radicalization is key, with action targeted on the underlying socioeconomic conditions of communities where individuals are most vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment. We need more effective communication and education tools.

I commend the considerable progress achieved over the past few months in the fight against Da'esh in Libya, Iraq and Syria. It is of the utmost urgency to deny them safe haven in other areas and by every means possible to stop the flows of foreign fighters from joining them. But that is only the first step. The liberated areas need reconstruction and stabilization.

For some time now, Romania has been promoting the idea that the response to terrorism requires multilateral action, based on international law. That is why Romania and Spain have suggested the establishment of an international court for acts of terrorism as a means of ensuring accountability for the horrific crimes we continue to witness.

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation for the outstanding contribution made by the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and for the active role he has played in strengthening the position of the United Nations in the international arena and promoting peace, stability and sustainable development. His leadership at the helm of the Organization has been an inspiration to numerous people around the world.

My country is committed to continuing to devote substantial political, diplomatic, human and financial resources to regional and global stability, in support of United Nations efforts in the maintenance of peace and security. That is why Romania has announced its bid for a seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2020-2021 term. I strongly believe that Romania's experience and solid track record in building bridges and trust among all Member States will make a valuable contribution to the Security Council's work.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Dacian Cioloş, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English text provided by the delegation*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Thomson on his election as President of General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I commend the exemplary manner of his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, who presided over the Assembly last year.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon marks the completion of his tenure this year. I recall our many meetings and conversations on a host of important issues. Always a true and trusted friend, he recognized Bangladesh's development gains as a model for the rest of the world. I wish him and Mrs. Ban continued success and good health.

Bangladesh's Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, standing before the General Assembly in 1974, stated:

> "Our total commitment to peace is born of the realization that only an environment of peace would enable us to ... mobilize and concentrate all our energies and resources in combating the

scourges of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment." (*A/PV.2243, para. 12*)

Our world is now at a juncture where the end of those scourges is in sight. There are many creative and practical solutions in our hands. The amazing power of technology, ideas and global citizens help us to imagine a brave new world. Yet our world is not free from tension and fear. Violent conflicts continue to rage in several places, with a heavy toll on human lives. Those fleeing from the conflicts are often denied protection across borders. Dire humanitarian needs are at times ignored and access to those in need is blocked. What was the crime of Aylan Kurdi, the innocent 3-year-old Syrian boy who drowned at sea? What was the fault of 5-year-old Omran Daqneesh, who was seriously wounded in his hometown of Aleppo by an air strike? As a mother, it is indeed hard to understand those cruelties. Will our global conscience not be stirred by such events?

We have just concluded the historic summit for refugees and migrants. The outcome of the summit should help redefine perceptions and realities of human mobility in our time. Migrants and refugees must be seen as potential agents for change both in their places of origin and destination. Bangladesh offers to co-facilitate the work of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We look forward to a constructive dialogue on all related issues at the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which we will host in December.

In 2015, we adopted a transformative development agenda with a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The political will behind the agenda needs to be translated into concrete and meaningful support for countries that are lagging behind. In order to catch up, the developing world needs access to transformative technologies. The internationally agreed development commitments for the least developed countries (LDCs) must be fulfilled in order to pave the way for their graduation. The Technology Bank for the LDCs should be geared to promoting innovation and predictable resource flows.

In Bangladesh, we have already mainstreamed most of the SDGs into our national development plans. A platform under the supervision of the Prime Minister has been created to coordinate and monitor the work. Consultations are now ongoing with local government, civil society, media and academia. They are being carried out in tandem with our Vision 2021 and Vision 2041 policies, which seek to realize Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's dream of building a "Sonar", or Golden Bangladesh, that is free from hunger, poverty, illiteracy and exploitation.

Our aim is to build an inclusive, empowered, digital and knowledge-based society. My Government is focusing on innovative public service delivery, mass access to information, and enhanced transparency and accountability. We have set up about 10,000 digital centres across the country in order to deliver 200 different services to people's doorsteps. Health services through mobile phones and a 24-hour web portal are complementing the work of 16,438 community and local health clinics. Digital laboratories and multimedia classrooms are operating in a growing number of educational institutions.

The growing web of physical and virtual connectivity is creating new opportunities for our people. As a key enabler of economic development, broadband connectivity should be available to every citizen of the world. I invite world leaders and other international partners to join hands in making this possible. Our Government is committed to providing a voice and data connection to every citizen by 2021.

Bangladesh's strategic location makes it an emerging hub for regional connectivity, foreign investment and global outsourcing. We have embarked on large-scale infrastructure projects to match our development aspirations. Multimodal transport networks are being built to promote trade and people-to-people contacts among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

The work of the 6.15 kilometre-long Padma Multipurpose Bridge was commissioned with our own resources. Discussions are under way to build a deep seaport, while our third seaport in Paira has commenced operations. Work on the metro rail in our capital, Dhaka, is also under way. One hundred economic zones are being developed across the country to allow potential investors to invest in Bangladesh.

Such forward-looking thrusts in our progress are supported by the impressive performance of our macroeconomic and socioeconomic indicators. In the fiscal period 2015-2016, our economy posted a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of over 7 per cent. Bangladesh has experienced one of the fastest poverty reduction rates in countries with a modest resource base. We have brought poverty down from 56.7 per cent in 1991 to 22.4 per cent today. We have already gone from

the low to the medium category in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report and have reached the World Bank's lower-middle income status. Over the past seven years, despite the global recession, our export earnings more than tripled to reach $34.24 billion, remittance flows have increased nearly threefold, and our foreign currency reserves have multiplied 8.5 times, from $3.5 billion to over $31 billion. During the same period, power-generation capacity almost tripled, as did foreign direct investment. A key to our development strategy is our focus on addressing inequality through social security, decent work and financial inclusion. We allocate over 13 per cent of our budget to social-safety-net spending, which is 2.3 per cent of our GDP.

Climate change threatens many of our development gains. The landmark Paris Climate Agreement recognizes the importance of adaptation, loss, damage and climate justice. Bangladesh has ratified the Agreement, and we hope that the large carbon-emitting countries will ratify it soon.

We must join ranks to preserve our natural resources for succeeding generations. Bangladesh reaffirms the need for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources so as to tap the potential of a blue economy.

The life-sustaining force of water is a finite resource. We have a shared responsibility to ensure the judicious and equitable use of our common waters. We must stand by our pledge to provide clean drinking water and sanitation for all. I shall continue to champion these issues as a member of the High-level Panel on Water.

I firmly believe that without women's participation, sustainable development will simply not be tenable. A host of measures, including the promotion of girls' education, undertaken half a decade ago have started to yield dividends. Women in Bangladesh are now increasingly becoming an integral part of our development endeavours. Around 3.5 million women are now working in the garment industry, a leading export earning sector. The percentage of women in all professions is rapidly rising. Bangladesh is perhaps the only country in the world today where women hold the posts of Prime Minister and Leader of the House, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker and Deputy Leader of the House. Presently, we have 70 women members of Parliament, constituting 20 per cent of the House. More than 12,500 elected women representatives are serving in local government bodies.

Last year, I mentioned terrorism and violent extremism as one of the two major global challenges of our time (see A/70/PV.19). We see these menaces sweeping across borders. No country seems immune, no individual beyond their reach. Terrorists are now often killing many innocent people everywhere, from the United States of America to Europe, and from Africa to Asia.

We believe that terrorists have no religion, caste or creed. We must unite in our resolve to defeat and degrade them in all their forms and manifestations. We have to identify the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. At the same time, we have to identify the mentors, masterminds, abettors, financiers, arms suppliers and trainers of these terrorists and extremists, and we must take strong action against them.

As a victim of terrorist attacks myself, I have a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and violent extremism. Our Government has succeeded in dismantling homegrown terrorist groups, plugging their regular financing pipelines and flushing out their regional operatives from our territory. With the vicious rise of certain international terrorist entities, it appears that some local fringe elements have drawn inspiration and managed to regroup and rebrand themselves.

Bangladesh, a unique country of religious harmony, experienced a grisly attack on 1 July 2016, when homegrown terrorists killed 20 people at a Dhaka restaurant. We were able to rescue 13 hostages unharmed, but that horrific incident left a deep scar on the hearts of the people of Bangladesh.

We are now battling this new wave of terrorism. We have undertaken massive programmes to awaken people and warn them against radicalization and to stand against militancy and extremism. The whole-of-society response I called for has been unprecedented. I am confident that with our people's resilience and support, we will ensure that terrorists have absolutely no place on our soil.

I would also like to urge the world community to work globally to dry up the sources of funds, arms and ammunition as well as moral and material support for militants and terrorists.

Bangladesh will carry on promoting the culture of peace that is at the heart of the agenda of the United Nations. We shall uphold our contribution to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Our decision to set up

a peacebuilding centre in Dhaka will allow us to share our experience with other countries that are emerging from conflict.

Likewise, we will remain vocal about recognizing the role of national judicial processes in ensuring accountability and justice for mass atrocities. We have moved past decades of impunity to ensure the trial of the local perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity during our liberation war, in 1971.

The recent efforts to relaunch the Middle East peace process and end the hostilities against the brotherly Palestinian people must be pursued, in the right direction.

In our globalized world, there are challenges. But there are also potential opportunities and benefits for all, but only if we know how to manage the process properly. We are all gathered here to serve our one humanity. Let us work through our differences and find common ground to make the pragmatic changes we wish to see in the world around us. The United Nations provides us with a unique platform to do so. Let us renew our resolve to create an Organization of enduring relevance.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Georgia.

Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Kvirikashvili (Georgia): It is my honour to address the General Assembly. Georgia has promoted the values of the United Nations since regaining its independence 25 years ago. In return, the United Nations has served as a partner for us — one of the oldest nations in the world — in developing a free and democratic State.

Twenty-five years ago, few of us could have imagined that today Georgia would have transformed itself from a country ravaged by civil war into a dynamic European democracy. We have made great progress in building strong and effective State institutions; ensuring the freedom of civil society, the media and markets; and on social cohesion and the rule of law. And we are proud to be ranked as the fifth-freest economy in the world, thus ensuring openness and integration into the global market and equal opportunities for all people interested in doing business in Georgia.

Since July, Georgia has been an associated country of the European Union and is harmonizing its policies, institutions, sectors and market rules with those of the European Union. We are an aspirant country to NATO, having the deepest and most comprehensive partnership with that organization of any nation. In the past few weeks, the United States Government, the European Union and NATO all took actions to emphasize that Georgia's future lies within the European and Euro-Atlantic community.

At its core, Georgia's foreign policy is aimed at building strong, mutually beneficial partnerships with the countries of our region and beyond. This path, chosen by our people, leads to more stability, security, peace and prosperity in our country and the region. The work never ends, however. Today, we are poised to thrive in a new millennium. We are building an innovation-driven community with all generations looking to embark upon an ever-brighter future. We are building a country that will ensure the unification of war-torn communities and abolish the Glienicke Bridge, versions of which still exist in the twenty-first century owing to the ongoing occupation of two of our regions, dividing peaceful societies on both sides.

A year ago we unanimously adopted a universal plan to better the world by setting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2030 Agenda. The much-needed transformative agenda for 2030 is indeed impressive. But let us be frank: despite the phenomenal blueprint of the Millennium Development Goals, we as an international community could not live up to the challenge. I welcome this year's focus on the transformative power of the SDGs. Let us make sure that in the next 15 years we do our utmost to really

fulfil, if not all, at least a good majority of the 17 Goals. To do so, we need to succeed nationally and, at the same time, support others in meeting their national goals. We also must remember how interrelated the Goals are. We have to strive for peace and security by fostering development, and vice versa.

Our Government has a vision on how to translate the Goals into national actions. This year, we launched a comprehensive four-point reform plan, which is about making the development of our country a success for each and every citizen of Georgia and for the development and stability of the region.

Effective governance with transparent and accountable institutions is the key to building peaceful and inclusive societies and promoting sustainable development. Focusing on SDG 16, we have made a clean break with the past by prioritizing good governance. Two days ago, together with Estonia, the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Development Programme, my country organized a special high-level cross-regional event aimed at sharing success stories on implementing SDG 16. Let me reiterate that we remain committed to sharing our experience and extending support to those who are pursuing transformation.

Within Georgia, our goal is to ensure maximum inclusion of all stakeholders in the decision-making process. We have created several platforms for engaging in regular dialogue with civil society and private-sector representatives. In promoting good governance, our aim is to make all public services even more accessible for business, and we have launched an ambitious project known as the Tbilisi Business House in our capital. With its online platform, it will serve as a one-stop shop for businesses and as a front office for all Government bodies.

Central to good governance is fair and efficient tax collection. Georgia already has one of the lowest tax burdens in the world, but it is liberalizing its tax scheme further. To encourage business to invest in development, and therefore in new jobs, we have taken the decision to abolish a profit tax on undistributed earnings. Although it is a costly reform, it ensures the long-term sustainability of businesses and jobs. We are also improving the tax administration system by strengthening the role of the judiciary in decisions on tax inspections, thereby ensuring increased protection for the private sector.

The trend lines for Georgia continue to improve. The World Bank has just reported that Georgia's poverty rate dropped by more than 10 per cent in the period 2012-2014. That is a major accomplishment. In 2015, the unemployment rate continued to decline and is now at its lowest level in the past 12 years. Salaries and wages are up substantially, as compared with several years ago. Georgia's economy is growing despite the downturns all around us, and foreign direct investment is approximately 100 per cent higher than in 2012. That translates directly into jobs for Georgians. Georgia now ranks fourth in terms of the ease of doing business in Europe and Central Asia and is on the path to becoming a true start-up nation.

In the history of Georgia since its independence, there have never been so many opportunities for hard-working people to launch or grow their own businesses. Those with an entrepreneurial spirit have more chances to succeed than ever. We have launched several projects that ensure access to capital and infrastructure for people with innovative ideas, especially those interested in manufacturing or farming in Georgia.

The secret to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and building resilient and inclusive communities lies in unlocking the hidden resource that every nation has: its people. Accordingly, education is among our top priorities. We decided to tailor our education system to ensure that it delivers for each individual and for our society and economy as a whole. We want every graduate of a professional or higher-education institution financed by the Government to be able to find his or her place in a competitive labour market. We want an education system that is competitive and delivers quality education not only to Georgian citizens, but also to foreign students. The construction of two new private technical universities, at an estimated development cost of €1 billion, started this year. We will soon be able to offer some of the best education opportunities in our region.

A healthy population is also key to further growth and development. Several years ago, we launched a flagship programme for universal health care. Today, all citizens of Georgia have heath-care insurance, thereby ensuring that medical care is a reality for hundreds of thousands of our citizens for the first time. We have also encouraged private investment in the health-care system, which has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in new private hospitals. A new

national e-pharmacy system, which will streamline the delivery of medicines to patients, is now being tested.

With the help of our partners, special programmes to eradicate persistent diseases have been started. Georgia is poised to become one of the first countries to eliminate hepatitis C. We are especially grateful to the United States for its help with this initiative.

Georgia's development agenda is first and foremost about our citizens and their equal rights. We believe in the power of free citizens and the role of Government in ensuring freedoms and opportunities for them. Sustainable development is not possible without human rights, access to justice and effective, transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions.

We have taken major steps to bolster the rule of law. We overhauled the court system, the Office of the Prosecutor, judicial ethics and the responsibilities of attorneys. We gave more rights to defendants, and we ended impunity for Government officials. All Georgians are now equal before the law and can benefit from a judiciary system that has gone through several waves of reforms to reach higher levels of independence and professionalism. We are continuing the reform process of the judiciary to achieve the highest international standards. Today, Georgia ranks twenty-ninth on the Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Project, ahead of a number of old and new European Union members.

Other important steps address a regrettable problem we inherited, that is, past human rights violations, with particularly egregious infractions in our prisons. We have acted swiftly and decisively to correct this. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment recently observed that the Georgian Government had turned this problem around since its election in 2012. The changes, he notes, are visible and quantifiable. We did this by putting in place legal and procedural mechanisms for combating the mistreatment of prisoners, including compensation for victims. We have enacted new anti-discrimination legislation. We have worked hard to achieve results in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment. We are implementing a national action plan to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. But there is still more to be done. For that purpose, we have set in place a new long-term comprehensive human rights strategy and action plan.

In less than three weeks, we will be holding parliamentary elections in Georgia. Campaigning started more than three months ago, and this period has shown evidence of Georgia's real democratic development. With free and pluralistic media and political environments, a strong and vocal civil society and the relevant legislative and institutional framework, we are ensuring a free, fair and transparent election process. On 8 October, the people of Georgia will be the winners, and our democracy will continue driving our country to a sustainable future.

Sustainable development cannot be fully realized if it is divorced from the overriding issue of security. In Georgia, we are reminded of this every day by a harsh reality, namely, that 20 per cent of our country is occupied by foreign troops, territory that they took by force. Hundreds of thousands of people continue to be denied the right to return to their homes.

We are grateful for the support offered by resolution 70/265, on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. It is time to translate this measure of support into action. Barbed wire fences installed by the occupiers divide Georgian families and communities. The populations in the occupied regions endure consistent ethnic discrimination and gross human rights violations. Their freedom of movement and their property rights are restricted. They are even denied education in their native languages. I condemn the recent act of holding elections for the Russian State Duma in Georgia's occupied territories, which is another part of Moscow's annexation policy. This all happens in the absence of any international monitoring, except for the limited involvement of the European Union Monitoring Mission, which has been denied access to the occupied territories.

The ongoing occupation and steps towards annexation remain the greatest existential challenge inherited by our Government. We have been seeking a workable solution with the Russian Federation. We have made some real progress in de-escalating tensions, but not all of Georgia's steps forward have been reciprocated. The Russian Federation has yet to honour even the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of August 2008.

Against that backdrop, I would like to once again reaffirm that this conflict must be resolved peacefully, based on full respect for Georgia's sovereignty

and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. We will continue to address the concerns of people living in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and to reconcile the war-torn communities across the occupation line. To that end, we will make all the benefits of our European agenda and all economic opportunities available to the people residing in the occupied territories. Our investment in the prosperous future of a united Georgia is additional stimulus for building confidence and reconciliation.

We will invest more than $5 billion in connectivity and infrastructure in the next four years. We will connect regions of Georgia with each other, as well as connect Georgia with the wider region. Thanks to Georgia's strategic location, our ports, roads and transport networks will be an important part of the ambitious and transformative Silk Road Development Plan connecting Europe to Asia. We are investing not only in infrastructure, but in policy platforms as well.

The Tbilisi Silk Road forum has proved to be a major success, attracting the involvement of 35 countries. In particular, we are honoured and excited to be working with China and the other nations of the Silk Road to provide a critical piece of a new trade and investment corridor that will benefit the entire world.

When we talk about connectivity, we must not omit the Internet, perhaps the greatest driver of global cooperation. Therefore, we have started the development of a country-wide broadband system that will bring the benefits of the Internet to the most remote villages and farms. Georgia is proud to be listed among the top countries in Internet freedom.

I am proud to be speaking to the Assembly on behalf of Georgia at a time when we are on the rise and at the centre of new developments connecting East and West. It is in this spirit that we seek to create a more secure and prosperous region, grounded in principles of sustainable development. We are working hard every day to take real actions that enhance the lives of our people while respecting their rights, their beliefs and their cultures. We look forward to continuing to work with the United Nations on achieving a shared vision for a better future.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Turnbull (Australia): The tenor of our times is change — accelerating at a pace and on a scale unprecedented in all of human history. In less than a generation, billions have been lifted out of poverty, and billions more have been enabled to connect to each other and to a world of knowledge and ideas in a manner barely imaginable a generation ago. Economic freedom between markets and within them, supercharged by the Internet, innovation and technology, has made possible the longest run of economic progress in the history of the world.

There are threats. At the meeting of the Group of Twenty we focused on how to resist the rising tide of protectionism, which is not a ladder to escape the low-growth trap, but a shovel to dig it deeper. But most important of all is the threat of conflict and instability. Where there is peace and the rule of law applies to both governors and governed, to both large States and small, we have seen remarkable strides in every measure of human progress. But in too many places there is no peace — wars that seem to have no end, intractable disorder that, in a connected world where technology has trumped geography, affects us all.

And yet despite setbacks to secure lasting peace, notably in Syria, over the past five years the United Nations system has produced a global Arms Trade Treaty, a pivotal global agreement on climate change, a transformational set of Sustainable Development Goals and a global blueprint for disaster-risk reduction. These successes add to the less high-profile, but hugely important work of the United Nations in the field — whether it be vaccinating children, helping

subsistence farmers to improve their crop yields, facilitating democratic elections or delivering emergency humanitarian support. They demonstrate the approach we need to take as we face the challenges of the future.

We need strength to respond firmly and decisively in the face of tyranny and abuse, to stand up to those who seek to divide societies through terror or to exploit desperation for their own benefit. We need compassion to assist those less fortunate than ourselves and to help rebuild communities that have been devastated by war or natural disasters. And now, more than ever, we need to work together towards common solutions.

That is why Australia's response to the global surge in migration is based on three pillars. First is strong border controls, with effective measures to combat people-smuggling and terrorism, supported by a planned migration programme. Second is a compassionate humanitarian policy, one that does not focus merely on the numbers that we take in, but offers substantial resettlement programmes and supports those countries hosting large numbers of refugees themselves. The third pillar is effective international and regional cooperation. These three pillars are inherently interlinked. They cannot and do not work in isolation. We believe that in order to secure and maintain public support for immigration, multiculturalism and a generous humanitarian programme, the public needs to know that it is their own Government that controls their borders.

In the year before Australia's strong border protection policies were introduced, over 25,000 irregular migrants arrived in Australia by boat. Over 1,200 people tragically died as a result, the victims of the criminal enterprises that prey on vulnerable people for profit. Without policies to ensure that we can decide who enters Australia, it would not have been possible for our Government to maintain the world's third-largest permanent refugee resettlement programme. It would not have been possible for Australia to commit to taking an additional 12,000 refugees displaced by the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, or to increase our broader humanitarian intake by more than 35 per cent.

We are one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world. We are both as old as the oldest continuous human culture of our first Australians and as young as the child in the arms of her migrant parents. We are not defined by race, religion or culture, but by shared political values of democracy, the rule of law and equality of opportunity — a "fair go". More than a quarter of us were born overseas, almost half of us have a parent born overseas, and each year we welcome around 200,000 permanent migrants to join our 24 million. We have a long experience of, and commitment to, settlement services to ensure that our immigrants, especially refugees, become successfully integrated into our society. We are indeed a nation of immigrants who are as diverse as the society that they have joined.

One such story is that of Aliir Aliir, who grew up in a refugee camp in Kenya after his family fled the bloody civil war in the Sudan. For Aliir, his family, and 150,000 other men, women and children, the Kakuma refugee camp was home. The camp provided the bare necessities of meals and shelter, but sports equipment was unimaginable. Aliir and his friends would improvise with a balloon wrapped in strips of old clothing to serve as a football. He was seven when he and his family came to Australia. Tall, fast and agile, Aliir was a natural for Australian Rules Football, and he has not looked back since he took up the game. Earlier this year, I was delighted when Aliir debuted for the Australian Football League (AFL) team I support, the Sydney Swans. Now 22, Aliir is one of the first Sudanese immigrants to play for the AFL and has become a role model in our multicultural nation, especially for young people in Sydney. There are thousands of migrant stories like Aliir's — leaders of Government, of business, of science and of the arts.

Australia would not be the country it is today without their contribution. Their stories are our stories, their successes are our successes. Of course, each country must adopt approaches that meet the needs of its own population and geography. But Australia's experience sheds some light on what the solutions are — strong borders, vigilant security agencies governed by the rule of law, and a steadfast commitment to the shared values of freedom and mutual respect. These are the ingredients of multicultural success. And they are lessons we can share to drive more effective, coordinated approaches to meet our humanitarian responsibilities.

That is why the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), adopted here at the United Nations on Monday to drive a more orderly and coordinated approach to migration and refugees, is so important. And that is why Australia and Indonesia, as Co-Chairs of the Bali Process on People Smuggling,

Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, are working with the countries of our region to protect migrants in vulnerable situations and to combat people-smuggling.

Now we need to see the world as it is, not as we would like it to be, or as we fondly imagine it once was. Secure borders are essential. Porous borders drain away public support for multiculturalism, for immigration and for aid to refugees. Most important of all, the only way to stop the scourge of people-smuggling is to deprive the people-smugglers of their product, and secure borders do just that.

Another fact we must recognize is that, while it would be desirable for more nations to increase their humanitarian intake, as Australia is doing, the truth is that the scale of the refugee and internally displaced persons problem is so great — 65 million — that resettlement in other countries can never come close to being near enough. The most urgent priority is to re-establish stability and ensure security in the regions of conflict and, in addition, ensure that there are greater opportunities for economic advancement in the source countries of so much of this irregular migration. All of this requires cooperation, and that includes, as noted in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the willingness of Member States to accept the return of their citizens who do not qualify for protection, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis.

Regional and national initiatives are crucial in our response to the surge in displaced people. Ultimately, we will find sustainable solutions only by addressing the root causes and drivers of this displacement. The largest of these are conflict and instability. Conflict — in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Libya, Yemen and other countries — is taking an unprecedented toll on innocent civilians who, like all of us, wish to live their lives and raise their families in peace and security.

Australia's armed forces are supporting the Government of Iraq in its efforts to liberate its territories from Da'esh. In defence of Iraq, we are joining with our coalition partners to defeat Da'esh in Syria. It is of vital importance that Da'esh's so-called caliphate is defeated in the field. As Nadia Murad said on Monday in the General Assembly (see A/71/PV.3), we must defeat these terrorists, these monsters, who killed or enslaved her family, once and for all. Our support has helped to put Da'esh on the back foot — it has now lost around 50 per cent of its territory in Iraq.

But conflict resolution is not enough. Establishing and maintaining a credible peace in the aftermath of conflict is just as important. In that regard, the United Nations must play a vital role in building and sustaining peace.

Australia is proud to have worked with Angola to facilitate a resolution to reform the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. As the sixth-largest donor in 2015, Australia is pleased to be a key supporter of the Peacebuilding Fund, which provides crucial assistance to peace agreements and supports capacity-building and rule-of-law projects in post-conflict societies. The United Nations role illustrates that vigilance against the risk of new conflicts requires investing in and protecting the international rules-based order.

We were all reminded of that recently when North Korea launched three medium-range ballistic missiles. Days later, Pyongyang conducted what we understand to be its largest-ever nuclear test. The provocative and dangerous actions of this rogue State breach unanimously agreed Security Council resolutions and threaten global peace and security. This shows why it was important for Australia and Myanmar to secure agreement at the East Asia Summit on a new commitment to end the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to work to support non-proliferation. Such provocation requires action, and Australia will work with the Security Council to support additional sanctions against North Korea.

It is this maturity and honesty that Australia would bring to the Human Rights Council should we be elected for our first-ever term, from 2018 to 2020. Rather than denying problems, we will seek to identify them, address them and learn from them. And we will hold others to the same standard as we hold ourselves.

Australia has prioritized five key areas in our approach to human rights: gender equality, governance, freedom of expression, the rights of indigenous peoples, and strong national human rights institutions and capacity-building. We are committed to providing principled and pragmatic leadership across these five areas — both through our actions at home and our advocacy and cooperation abroad. Over the course of the next decade and beyond, working together to combat terrorism and conflict, prevent global health pandemics, ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation, and address climate change will require enhanced global cooperation.

I do not need to reiterate the significance and complexity of the threat of climate change. We all understand what is at stake: the future of generations around the globe and the well-being of our planet itself. If we are to be successful, we must all, every one of us, act together to build a better world. And we are. The Paris Agreement last year was a shining example of global cooperation for the common good. In a historic display of commitment, over 170 nations signed the Paris Agreement in New York in April. Even more have submitted plans for action, and Australia will play its part. We are committed to ratifying the Paris Agreement, and we are confident that we will meet our ambitious 2030 target of cutting our per capita emissions by 52 per cent — just as we will meet and beat our Kyoto Protocol commitments.

Australia has also increased the profile of climate change in our overseas aid programme, including through our $200 million commitment to the Green Climate Fund, because we know climate change amplifies many development challenges. We also know that our commitment to action creates new opportunities for innovation and growth, which means more jobs.

We are combining reductions in emissions with strong economic growth, which, from a rate of 2 per cent a year ago, has been running at 3.3 per cent over the past year. Our new cities policy, too, is focused on clean development, enhanced amenity, sustainability and livability. And, as the land of droughts and flooding rains, we have learned how to make every drop count and share our experience in water management with other nations, including earlier today at the High-level Panel on Water.

It would be remiss of me not to offer our deepest thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership and his commitment to addressing, over the past decade, so many of the challenges I have mentioned here. The Secretary-General leaves an important legacy that his successor must now take forward with the international community. And as his successor does so, we, the United Nations, must stay the course. We must remain committed to displaying sufficient strength and courage to do what is needed in the face of great adversity. We must continue to show the compassion and understanding needed to ensure that our societies are inclusive, diverse and resilient. And we must continue to cooperate at the regional and international levels to find common solutions to these global challenges. I am confident that together, as the United Nations, we will ensure a better future for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Chan-o-cha (Thailand) (*spoke in Thai; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Last year, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a plan of action for balanced and sustainable global development. The Agenda puts all peoples at the heart of development policy and aspires to give them equitable access to opportunity, progress and prosperity, while leaving no one behind. Such a transformative Agenda represents a crucial paradigm shift in the United Nations development agenda, which seeks to be more inclusive and more responsive to new challenges.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of Thailand's membership in the United Nations. It is also the first year of the implementation of important agendas, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The international community must therefore join hands and hearts so as to ensure that those agendas are implemented effectively.

Thailand firmly believes that sustainable development cannot take place where there is no peace and security or when human rights are violated, abused or disregarded. We also hold the opposite to be

true — that peace and security is unsustainable without development or when people are deprived of their rights. The three United Nations pillars are therefore truly interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The recent migration crisis is a clear example of just how intertwined the security, development and social dimensions are. No country is immune from the effects of crises happening in other parts of the world. It is therefore our shared responsibility to address all challenges at the root-cause level in order to derive sustainable solutions.

Today we face multilayered and interconnected challenges. Addressing them, as well as finding universal solutions to them, is made all the more complex because of the diversity of the world's 7 billion people in some 200 countries, with their different beliefs, histories and cultures. The international community should therefore work closely together to find ways of achieving peaceful coexistence based on mutual understanding and respect, as well as shared responsibility, where everyone is given opportunities and basic rights in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner. We must also ensure full respect for, and compliance with, our international obligations, especially those whose breaching could have serious consequences, such as obligations concerning nuclear disarmament.

In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must take on shared responsibility and put in collective efforts, as well as promote the active engagement of regional, political and economic groupings. No single country, even the most powerful or prosperous, can go it alone in that regard. International cooperation — be it North-South, South-South, or triangular — is therefore essential and can be the universal push we need to transform our world.

This year, Thailand has the honour of serving as the Chair of the Group of 77 (G-77). Our stated objective has been to transform vision into concrete action. We have therefore been coordinating and bridging the Group's position with other groups and partners, so as to enhance mutual trust and promote common interests. This year, for the very first time, Thailand, as the chair of the G-77, was invited to the Group of Twenty (G-20) Summit, held in Hangzhou, where we took part in discussions on how to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That was an important and historic moment for the G-77, because the G-20 is a grouping of the world's major economies.

Additionally, Thailand has shared its experiences and lessons learned in overcoming socioeconomic challenges through His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) as an alternative development model that takes a people-centred approach and emphasizes moderation, reason, resilience, virtue, knowledge and inclusiveness. That Thai model has so far been applied and adapted to fit the national context in over 20 developing countries.

Since assuming the G-77 chairmanship, Thailand has initiated the SEP model for the SDGs partnership programme as a platform for the exchange of views, experiences and best practices among members on issues such as investment and information and communications technology for development. We have also learned about homegrown approaches to development from one another through bilateral and trilateral cooperation arrangements — for example, with our development partners.

Thailand stands ready to promote further cooperation with all groups, such as the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa group and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which also attach great importance to sustainable development. We will also strengthen existing regional mechanisms so as to give further impetus to efforts to transform our world. Next month, Thailand will host the second Asia Cooperation Dialogue Summit to discuss, among other things, the implementation of SDGs in the region.

At the ASEAN-United Nations Summit in Vientiane earlier this month, the Secretary-General spoke about the important role played by regional mechanisms in the promotion of international peace and sustainable development. All ASEAN leaders, including myself, believe that the efforts that we will be making to achieve the SDGs will be key factors in the transformation of our world for the better.

The ASEAN Community is now in its first full year. It has brought the peoples of ASEAN closer together, in particular through our economic and cultural links. We see that closer cooperation will also help to reduce conflict and further promote peace within the region.

The Thai Government attaches great importance to achieving sustainable development. We have established the National Committee on Sustainable Development and incorporated the SDGs into our twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2017-2021 and our 20-year national strategy. We are continuing

with our policy of providing quality health-care services for all, as well as ensuring equitable access to education for all, whether they be Thai nationals, migrants or foreign workers. To that end, we can count on the Government's universal health coverage programme as well as other initiatives, such as the anti-microbial resistance campaign. We also have a compulsory education programme to ensure basic education for all.

Moreover, the Government places high importance on raising living standards, protecting freedoms, reducing disparities and promoting equitable access to basic services. We have reviewed the relevant national laws and regulations with a view to achieving tangible and sustainable results in those areas. We have enacted new legislation on gender equality and have taken measures to protect at-risk and vulnerable groups, including newborn children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. We also provide adequate housing and land distribution to low-income earners, because we believe that those people, if empowered and protected, can be valuable assets and important agents of change in our universal push to transform our world.

On the issue of climate change and the environment, Thailand has ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We call on other countries that have not yet done so to become party to the Agreement at the earliest as a show of our joint commitment, solidarity and shared responsibility in addressing that issue, which affects all of humankind, especially small island developing States.

With regard to our economy, the Thai Government is implementing the Thailand 4.0 programme, which employs technology and innovation as driving forces for targeted and sustainable economic development in such sectors as agriculture and industry. The programme emphasizes education, infrastructure, research and development, and also creates incentives and an enabling environment for the private sector through improvements in business laws and regulations, so as to be able to fight corruption. We believe that such an approach will help overcome the middle-income trap and allow our people to participate fully in the country's future.

On peace and international security, Thailand has consistently supported United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. Our peacekeepers have participated in some 20 missions and have contributed to enabling local people to live normal lives, play a part in strengthening their own societies and participate in the long-term development of their countries. Those efforts are also consistent with achieving SDG 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

Thailand fully supports the effective implementation of SDG 17, on strengthened international cooperation and global partnership. We believe that there is no one-size-fits-all model for development, since each country has its own specific needs and limitations. Therefore, we need to make the appropriate adaptations so as to fit the context of each country by sharing of experiences and best practices, with a view to achieving unity in diversity.

The Thai Government has laid down the foundations for sustainable development. On 7 August, the Thai people voted to approve the draft Constitution in a democratic referendum. At present, constitutional by-laws are being considered that will lead to the holding of general elections in late 2017, in accordance with our road map. That referendum reflects the genuine intentions of the Government to promote the democratic process, while taking into account the views expressed by the international community. The Government came in to oversee the transition period and restore order and security. Once the situation returned to normal with security restored, the Government ended certain temporary measures, such as by lifting, last week, the military jurisdiction over civilians.

The Government remains actively engaged in addressing long-neglected and deeply rooted problems of security, corruption, human trafficking and crime. We believe that addressing the root causes of such problems can serve as a strong foundation for sustainable democracy and good governance, with the hope that Thailand and the Thai people will remain constructive members of the global community in the long term.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts throughout the past decade. He has been the man behind many important and commendable initiatives driving change and progress in the international community — for example, the Human Rights Up Front initiative and the Agenda for Humanity. I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime

Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Mr. Kurz (Austria): I belong to a generation that was born into a globalized world. For us, globalization is not a threat — it is a fact of life. As Kofi Annan once said, arguing against globalization is like arguing against the laws of gravity. Let us be clear: the fact that the world has grown closer together has brought about enormous benefits. It has reduced international poverty, contributed to the spread of technology and reduced the distances between countries.

But we must also recognize that globalization has not only led to positive consequences; it also created new challenges. Events taking place on the other side of the globe can have a direct impact on our lives. That includes not only in the economic world, but in all spheres of life. Especially in recent years, we have seen a dramatic increase in threats to stability throughout the world.

When I started out as Foreign Minister, in December 2013, Ukraine had full sovereignty over its eastern borders and Crimea. The Iraqi Government was still in control of Mosul and other parts of the country, and religious minorities, such as the Yazidis, still lived in peace and security in their homeland. Yet today, thinking in terms of confrontational blocs has returned to Europe. Today Da'esh threatens whole States, and radicalization and violent extremism are on the rise worldwide.

Given those developments, I can understand that people are shocked and overburdened by the many images they see of violence, suffering and destruction, and that they would wish to block those images from their living rooms. But the truth is that, while one can turn off the television and block off the news from one's home, what cannot be changed in a globalized world is the fact that something taking place elsewhere can have a direct impact on our lives. The more interconnected our world becomes, the greater the responsibility of each one of us is to not ignore events taking place in other parts of the world. The more globalized our world becomes, the more interest each one of us must take in strengthening stability and prosperity in other parts of the world, not only out of solidarity but also out of self-interest.

One thing is very clear today: we all need to join forces. We need the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). And we need effective multilateralism to achieve what we most desire, namely, security and stability.

Today threats to security and stability arise from many challenges at the same time. The destruction caused by military conflicts is increasing, violent extremism is growing and weapons of mass destruction still exist. The conflict that is closest to us in Austria is the one in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. We remain very concerned, because the Minsk Agreement has still not been implemented, and progress has been frustratingly slow. In our opinion, we need to find solutions beyond the ceasefires. We need a free and stable Ukraine that has good relations with both the Russian Federation and the European Union.

To achieve greater security, we must rebuild trust. In that respect, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which reaches from Vancouver to Vladivostok, is uniquely placed to promote stability and security. During Austria's chairmanship of the OSCE in 2017, we intend to contribute to rebuilding trust and defusing conflicts in the OSCE area, such as in eastern Ukraine, Georgia, Nagorno Karabakh and Transnistria. But we are also faced with a ring of instability in Europe's wider neighbourhood — in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

On Syria, we need to reinforce diplomatic efforts to establish a ceasefire, enable safe access for humanitarian aid and start a political process. That is the only way to end the ongoing humanitarian crisis in that long-suffering country. We are outraged by the attacks on medical facilities and aid convoys. Let me be clear: all of those who committed crimes against civilians must be brought to justice.

Around the globe, radicalization and violent extremism pose serious threats to our societies, undermining security, development, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must all realize that acts of religious extremism do not happen only in areas of conflict; there are religious extremists who radicalize

our youth even in the heart of our own societies. Tens of thousands of foreign fighters have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in order to rape, kill and try to exterminate religious minorities in other parts of the world. They include more than 5,000 people from the EU, among them 300 from Austria. We cannot accept that our citizens commit such crimes in other parts of the world, and we have to be clear that when they return, they pose a major threat to our societies. We therefore have to increase efforts within our communities to prevent young people from being misled by those who abuse religion.

We also have to remain committed in our fight against Da'esh and other terrorist groups in countries like Syria, Iraq and Libya, because destroying Da'esh would be the most powerful measure to counter radicalization. The more we deny radical terrorists their success stories, the fewer new fighters will be recruited from other parts of the world. If we are unsuccessful in that fight, we will see increased radicalization and terrorism worldwide, with no safe havens, neither in Europe nor elsewhere.

In an ever less secure world facing ever greater tensions among the major Powers, nuclear disarmament remains the number one unfinished business. The recent nuclear tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea serve as a warning sign. We all agree that the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear-weapon explosion would be unacceptable. We must therefore finally rid ourselves of all nuclear weapons. Experience shows that the first step in eliminating weapons of mass destruction is to prohibit them through legally binding norms. Together with other Member States, Austria will submit a draft resolution to convene negotiations on a legally binding comprehensive instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons in 2017.

But that is not enough. We also need to put an end to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. When such weapons are used in cities and other urban areas — as we have seen in Syria — more than 90 per cent of the victims are civilians. The destruction of homes, hospitals, schools and other infrastructure forces people to leave. The world would be a safer place without such weapons, especially for children, women and elderly people. We will therefore convene a meeting in early October to promote that goal, and we hope for Members' support.

The United Nations is central when it comes to tackling the global challenges of our time. We need an effective guardian for our shared values and principles. We need a strong United Nations to provide security, achieve stability and restore people's confidence. In that context, I would like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership during his two terms at the United Nations. His moral leadership has made it possible to achieve success, inter alia, through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Let me assure all of those present that Austria will remain committed to supporting the United Nations and its goals, both as a Member State and as the host country to one of its headquarters.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention, and to 7 minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Gambhir (India): I take the floor today in exercise of the right of reply in response to the long tirade earlier today by the representative of Pakistan about the situation in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir (see A/71/PV.11). The worst violation of human rights is terrorism, when practiced as an instrument of State policy, it becomes a war crime. What my country and other neighbours in our region are facing today is Pakistan's long-standing policy of sponsoring terrorism, the consequences of which have spread well beyond our region.

Only last week, the international community honoured the memory of the thousands of innocent victims around the world who lost their lives not far from here in New York, 15 years ago, in a most horrifying terrorist attack. The world has not yet forgotten that the trail of that dastardly attack led all the way to Abbottabad, in Pakistan. The land of Taxila, one of the greatest learning centres of ancient times, is now host to the Ivy League of terrorism. It attracts aspirants and apprentices from all over the world. The effects of its toxic curriculum are felt across the globe.

It is therefore ironic that we have heard today the preaching of human rights and ostensible support for

self-determination by a country that has established itself as the global epicentre of terrorism. Shortly before Pakistan gave its hypocritical sermon in the Hall, its envoy in New Delhi was summoned in the context of the most recent of the terror attacks, in Uri, which claimed 18 Indian lives. That terrorist attack is part of a trail of the continuous flow of terrorists trained and armed by our neighbour and tasked to carry out terrorist attacks in my country.

What we see in Pakistan is a terrorist State that channels billions of dollars, much of it diverted from international aid, to training, financing and supporting terrorist groups as militant proxies against its neighbours. Terrorist entities and their leaders, including many so designated by the United Nations, continue to roam its streets freely and operate with State support. With the approval of the authorities, many terrorist organizations raise funds openly, in flagrant violation of Pakistan's international obligations.

Even today, we have heard support expressed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan for a self-acknowledged commander of a known terrorist organization, Hizbul Mujahideen. Pakistan is a country with a democracy deficit. In fact, it practices terrorism on its own people. It extends support to extremist groups, suppresses minorities and women, and denies basic human rights, including through draconian laws.

As a democracy, India is firmly resolved to protect all our citizens from all acts of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. We cannot and will not allow terrorism to prevail.

Finally, we have heard Pakistan, whose nuclear proliferation record is marked by deception and deceit, talk about restraint, renunciation and peace. It has made similar false promises to us — the international community — on terrorism. Perhaps the renunciation of lies and self-restraint on threats would be a good place for Pakistan to start.

Mr. Faisal (Pakistan): The Indian Government has chosen to criticize the statement made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan (see A/71/PV.11), which reflects the sentiments and aspirations of the oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir. For 70 years they have faced the bullets, repression and brutality of an illegal occupation. No number of statements can alter that historical fact. The dispute involving Jammu and Kashmir cannot be wished away. Pakistan will continue to stand by the people of Jammu and Kashmir and extend its full diplomatic and political support to their movement for freedom from Indian oppression.

The cold-blooded murder of Burhan Wani sparked widespread and unprecedented protests across Kashmir, which were spontaneous and indigenous and provided irrefutable evidence of the Kashmiri people's rejection of the Indian occupation. Peaceful protesters were mercilessly fired upon, blinded and critically injured. Yet the use of brutal force cannot extinguish their burning aspirations. Every day, young and old come, defying the curfew and dodging the bullets as they seek merely to assert their right to determine their own destiny. The right to self-determination has been promised to them by the international community through a series of Security Council resolutions. Although that promise has yet to be realized seven decades later, time has not weakened their resolve or their aspirations. In fact, that goal remains active and vibrant in the hearts of the Kashmiris.

The people of Indian-occupied Kashmir look to the international community, especially the members of the Security Council, to deliver on the pledge to hold a free, fair and impartial plebiscite under United Nations auspices, so as to enable the people there to decide their future. That is the democratic and legal right of the Kashmiri people. No amount of verbiage on the part of the Indian delegation can obfuscate that reality.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.